

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

OCTOBER ISSUE 2010
100% Australian Content

FIRST-LOOK

DIRT 3

Unveiled: 50 years of rallying in one game!

WE'VE PLAYED IT!

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

EXCLUSIVE: WORLD-FIRST MULTIPLAYER HANDS-ON!

FOOTY FACE-OFF
FIFA vs. PES

Who'll score this year?

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KANE & LYNCH 2
BIOSHOCK INFINITE
SHANK & MORE!

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H.A.W.X. 2

Tom Clancy's latest takes off!

VERDICT

MAFIA II

2K's most ambitious game
yet tried and tested!

STUDIO VISIT

DJ HERO 2

Spinning the black circle
with the developers

ASSASSIN'S CREED BROTHERHOOD

Da Vinci's war machines unleashed!

PLAYSTATION MOVE

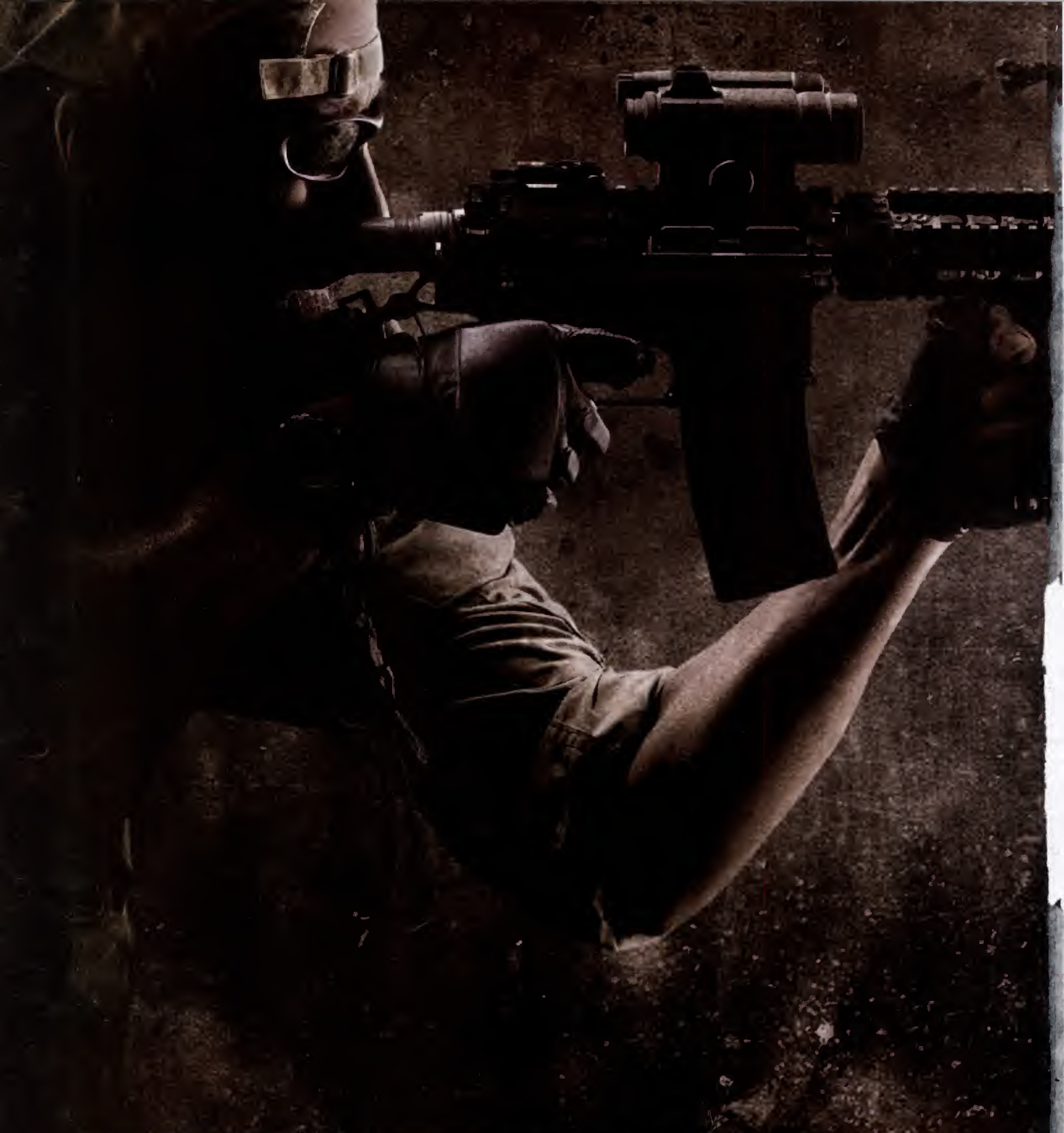
Your essential guide

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INSIDE: THE MANLIEST PS3 GAME THEY'LL NEVER MAKE



WIELD THE POWER OF BIG ARMY



DOMINATE DICE MULTIPLAYER



JOIN THE ELITE AS A TIER 1 OPERATOR



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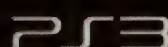
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IN STORES SEPTEMBER 16TH



Check the Classification

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PlayStation 3

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IN STORES SPRING 2010



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INFOCUS

The ginger ninja returns with wheel-based boarding. Check out these hot new shots of Shaun White's Skateboarding! Page 15

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“We wanted *Black Ops* multiplayer modes to be accessible to everyone”

DAN BUNTING, DIRECTOR OF ONLINE, TREYARCH

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Duty called. Will you accept the charges?



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Is this sequel great balls of fire, or has Ubisoft Romania gone into a flat spin?



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We check out the handy-cam game guaranteed to get you motion-sick. With fun.



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Nazis. We outsmart these guys. Come and watch as we befuddle Hitler.



75 SHANK

There's no school like the old school. Especially when 2D violence is concerned.



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Join us as we equip up and quest to unravel a great mystery: where are Donald Duck's pants?



78 ACE COMBAT JOINT ASSAULT

Sounds like a game that needs a Bob Marley soundtrack. Missed opportunity, Namco.

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We knew
it was you. You
broke our hearts.

MAFIA II

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30 WIN!



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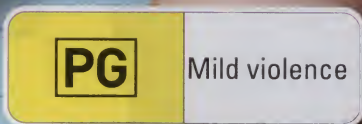


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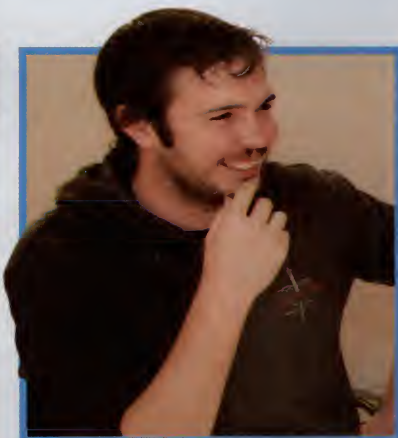
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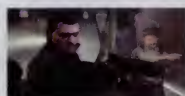
SHOUT OUTS: KJR :: Vinnie :: Nicole :: Luke Mathew (who just said "Dad") :: Lucy :: MJ :: Mackie Manor :: Dika :: Vispi "ball-grab" Bhopti :: Mack



LUKE REILLY
EDITOR

PSN:

Capt_Flashheart



PLAYING:

MAFIA II



WANTING:

GRAN TURISMO 5

WELCOME!

So *Mass Effect 2* is coming to PlayStation 3.

BioWare CEO Ray Muzyka made the announcement minutes ago at Gamescom in Germany during Electronic Arts' press conference. At the time of going to print no other details about the game were revealed.

The PlayStation 3 version will contain the full *Mass Effect 2* game and "hours of bonus content." It's unclear what this bonus content actually is.

Chuckling the original *Mass Effect* onto the Blu-ray would be a good start.

Unfortunately BioWare has made it clear there are no plans to bring *Mass Effect* to PS3 and Microsoft has issued a response saying *Mass Effect* will remain an Xbox 360 exclusive.

The critically-acclaimed space-RPG *Mass Effect 2* migrating to PS3 is great news for PS3 owners, but it's a massive shame that big business is getting in the way of PS3 gamers enjoying the whole story as it's meant to be enjoyed.

You see, the problem is *Mass Effect* and *Mass Effect 2* are linked in a huge number of ways. Decisions you made, characters you saved and characters you killed in the original all have an effect on the sequel. PS3 owners will be denied the ability to appreciate the full depth of this universe and be launched straight into *Mass Effect 2* with very little context whatsoever. This is like refusing to let someone watch *A New Hope* and expecting them to pick up the story from *The Empire Strikes Back*.

With more and more games leaning towards impersonal multiplayer blasting and tossing narrative out the window it's a crying shame the importance of story is being ignored in this instance.

If you don't know or care what's going on, where's the engagement?

Uke Pity

OPS ON: FAVOURITE STORY



STEPHANIE GOH

ART DIRECTOR

Deus Ex. I don't normally like sci-fi but this is gritty stuff, and I'm looking forward to the next one. It helps that the protagonists are dark and mysterious.

PSN: TBA

PLAYING:

Shank

WANTING:

Castlevania: LOS



PAUL TAYLOR

DEPUTY EDITOR

Metal Gear Solid. I'm still baffled by the entire saga but I totally appreciate Hideo Kojima's vision and masterful weaving of fact and fiction.

PSN: paulgusta

PLAYING:

Mafia II

WANTING:

DJ Hero 2



ADAM MATHEW

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

I fell for *BioShock's* story twist like a blind roofer. That plot thickened quicker than my beard, which is two months in. Eating fairy floss is impossible now.

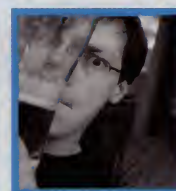
PSN: YourmumsAWESOME

PLAYING:

Shank

WANTING:

My beard to be less red



JAMES COTTEE

CONTRIBUTOR

One simply can't go past the tragedy of *Pac-Man*. Unable to face his problems without drugs, he is ultimately consumed by his personal demons.

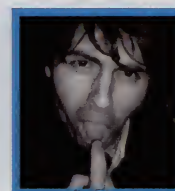
PSN: DrWho3987

PLAYING:

Borderlands DLC

WANTING:

Monster Hunter Freedom 3



JAMES ELLIS

CONTRIBUTOR

Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2. It has spandex on spandex and freaks versus freaks. Plus Iron Man as a commie? It recontextualises what you know.

PSN: gtfaster49

PLAYING:

Uncharted 2

WANTING:

FIFA 11



BACK IN BLACK

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY ANNOUNCED

Gotham goes mad as Batman returns

Rocksteady Studios blew us away with *Batman: Arkham Asylum*. Heaped in praise, the North-London based studio is descending from its belfry with a sequel, and it's got quite a few new tricks hooked onto its utility belt.

As its name suggests, *Batman: Arkham City* offers a much broader environment and it won't be a simple rehash that feels like *Arkham Asylum* 1.5. Set a few years after the events of the first game, warden Quincy Sharp has taken credit for Batman's defusing of the Joker's riot and has used the popularity to push for a larger, more secure penitentiary for Gotham's freaks. In a move not unlike *Escape From New York*, Sharp secures Gotham's slums, walls it all off and guards its perimeter with highly-trained mercs. No other measures of rescue or rehabilitation are offered inside this Thunderdome; it's every two-bit bastard and super villain for his or herself.

To make matters worse the whole big house is run by the enigmatic Hugo Strange, a warden that is obsessed with Batman's true identity, whose past is a mystery and whose secret dealings with the more lethal inmates do not bode well for the Dark Knight.

Batman is at large in a vast, open world prison city and he can slingshot and glide from skyscraper to skyscraper. He also has a new cannonball skill that has him tucking up and continuing his forward momentum from a grapple. Bats' has also learned a few new combat surprises, such as spraying explosive gel onto enemies (great crowd control), the ability to counter two attackers at the same time and he can even ninja-catch objects thrown at him and return them to sender. Make no mistake, the streets below are the skyline are roaming with ne'er do wells and Rocksteady promises a level of detail similar to *Arkham Asylum*, with a story waiting around every corner.

Speaking of narrative: the primary antagonists in this sequel shift focus away from purely evil characters like the Joker and Harley Quinn. Now you'll be matching wits with two morally ambiguous villains; Two Face (who is creating an empire in order to survive), and the occasionally naughty Catwoman is scratching about as well. Initial information confirms nothing, but whispers of co-op featuring the Bat and the Cat continue.

Rocksteady is aiming to top everything it did in the first game and wants to make the same leap they made from nothing to *Arkham Asylum*. We hope this plucky studio can pull it off.

Batman: Arkham City is beautiful, ambitious and should be in stores by late 2011.



26 **ANGRY SACKBOY**
Some say his blood is inflammable. All we know is he's called Angry Sackboy.

IN SHORT...

A brief look at this month's news



- 2K Games has announced *BioShock Infinite*. Set in 1912, this prequel introduces an entirely new narrative experience that lifts players out of the familiar confines of Rapture and rockets them to Columbia, an immense city in the sky.
- Confirmed: *Gran Turismo 5* DOES feature go karts (and a course editor!)
- Moments before our deadline Sony has announced *Resistance 3* and *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One*.
- EA has announced *Mass Effect 2* is coming to PS3 in early 2011.
- Sony has revealed Yahoo!7's *catch-up TV service* is coming to PS3.
- *Virtua Tennis 4* for PlayStation Move is coming.
- *True Crime: Hong Kong* has been pushed to 2011.
- *Devil's Third* will be out sometime before March 31, 2013.
- It appears that *Killzone 3* will be getting a beta in some form.
- Rumour has it Ubisoft is planning to release the PS2 *Splinter Cell* and *Prince of Persia* trilogies on Blu-ray for PS3.
- Codemasters has officially unveiled *Operation Flashpoint: Red River*. It'll be set in Tajikistan along the Vakhsh River.
- David O. Russell, director of *Three Kings*, is no longer being considered for the job of directing the *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* movie.
- Rumours point to a follow-up to *Need for Speed SHIFT* appearing in early 2011.
- *Saints Row* and *Red Faction* developer *Volition* is working on a new IP.
- EA has announced that the previously Wii-exclusive upcoming *NBA Jam* will be free for PS3 owners via a one-time download code only available with *NBA Elite 11*.
- A new rumour suggests that *Borderlands* developer Gearbox handed *Duke Nukem Forever* to complete. While Take-Two confirmed that it retains the rights to the game, it didn't offer any comment on the matter.
- id Software's John Carmack has stated we should expect to see *Doom 4* before we see *RAGE*.
- The latest songs added to the *Rock Band 3* setlist include 'The Beautiful People' by Marilyn Manson, 'Cold As Ice' by Foreigner, and 'Rock Lobster' by The B-52s.

“The war machines pose a major threat to Ezio. These are all based on **drawings Leonardo made for actual inventions**”

VINCENT PONTBRIAND

INTERVIEW

ASSASSIN'S CREED
BROTHERHOOD

Producer **Vincent Pontbriand** sheds a little light on the shadiest of assassins

OPS: At the end of your E3 demo Caterina is captured by Cesare and is held in the Castel San Angelo in Rome. How will Ezio free her?

VP: Moments after of the attack on the Villa started Caterina decides to escape from the Villa with her troops in the hopes to flank the attackers but she is caught by Cesare and his men. Now a prisoner, she is held captive in a cell located in one of the highest floor of Castel Sant'Angelo. The Castel is the fortress of Rodrigo Borgia, Pope Alexander VI, which houses his troops.

The infiltration of the Castel requires the player to sneak in without being noticed by the outnumbering Papal Guards. Ezio will have to use all of his abilities such as free-running and climbing to infiltrate the fortress' inner walls and reach the castle's higher grounds. This is a long and perilous mission in the game set near its beginning. Later in the mission, Ezio is tasked to protect Caterina, which in effect means he will have to defeat mobs of enemies. Outnumbered, Ezio must use his arsenal of weapons and his new moves, such as the ability to use the gun in combination with his sword, to survive against all odds as well as his stealth skills.

OPS: What's the fight club?

VP: Based in the Mercenary HQ, Ezio can bet on fights and enter into the tournament. Challenged in a duel and encircled by an enthusiastic crowd, players will be challenged in different combat where quick reflexes and strategic thinking are your only allies to victory.

Depending the type of combat – unarmed, no counter, etc. – and the number of enemies the player choose it will increase its gain of money if he succeed.

OPS: What happens with Da Vinci in ACB?

VP: Leonardo left the Villa at the end of *Assassin's Creed II*. Ezio hasn't seen him for a little while but, suddenly, all the guards in Rome seem to have new guns. So there's something suspicious going on. Leonardo will return and offer certain services to Ezio, but as for his motivations, you'll have to play the game to see what they are.

OPS: What about Da Vinci's war machines?

VP: The war machines pose a major threat to Ezio. These are all based on drawings Leonardo made for actual inventions. One of them is the naval cannon which can render useless an entire fleet in minutes. Mounted on top of a gondola, the cannon shoots flares which enflame the sails of ships, making them immobile and useless. Another war machine is Leo's version of the machine gun. On top of a chariot is a mounted wheel with multiple small cannons. Like the chamber of a revolver, each cannon is one shot – transforming the mounted wheel into a deadly, but primitive, machine gun.

Ezio's going to need to destroy them to stop Cesare's advance through Italy. We're not going to reveal how Cesare got a hold of the plans for these inventions just yet. There will be more about this closer to launch of the game.

OPS: We understand Machiavelli will play a larger role in ACB...

VP: Machiavelli will play a much larger role in

Brotherhood than he did in *Assassin's Creed II*. He's the leader of the Assassins in Rome when Ezio arrives and he's not going to just let Ezio come in and take charge. So expect some competition between Ezio and Machiavelli. At the same time, he has a lot to learn about leadership and Ezio will be a major influence on him, despite their conflict. As for Mac's gameplay role, he will be a major mission-giver in the game. You're going to receive Assassination missions from him, as well as the locations of Templars in the city. How you dispatch them is, of course, up to you.

OPS: What new moves will Ezio be able to perform while on the horse in the city's streets?

VP: This time, while riding the horse, Ezio be able to perch himself on his horse's saddle. This is a neat cool move you can do inside or outside cities. When perched, you will be able to jump on beams or on buildings and start a fluid free-run sequence.



Also, Ezio can now use various weapons, such as crossbows, swords or spears, and fight enemies such as horsemen and footmen – in a similar fashion to a joust. One new attack I think is very cool is when you impale a guard, who's on a horse, from the ground using a spear. I believe there's nothing more gratifying than, when you are about to lose a target in horse chase, to jump from your horse and climb on a building as to reduce the distance only to jump and assassinate the horse rider. It's just epic.

OPS: How will Ezio impact Rome? What can you tell us more of the Rome Rebuild system?

VP: After the events in Rome's Sistine Chapel, Ezio retreats to his villa in Monteriggioni seeking inner peace.

Meanwhile, Cesare, the ambitious, young general of the Papal forces, strikes back at the Assassins for the attack on the Pope. Setting up his battalion overnight, Cesare attacks the heart of the Assassin order and catches by surprise Ezio and his allies early morning – defeating Ezio and his allies.

To strike back at the heart of the enemies, Ezio journeys to Rome where he discovers a city in ruins and ruled through fear and corruption by the Papal forces. As Ezio becomes a leader, someone who unites the struggling Assassin order against the forces of the Borgia and the Templars, he will witness his impact on the city of Rome and the citizens. Determined to help Rome's inhabitants, Ezio can bring the wonders of Renaissance and have a direct impact on the gameplay by investing into buildings, such as stables, shops and other surprises. This system, which we call "Rebuild Rome", will also have an indirect impact on the city itself as each district will improve visually and building will be going from grey, run-down buildings to flourishing homes. Citizens will also see their life change and get better as beggars and dubious individuals will be replaced by artist and merchants. As you upgrade Rome, you will also unlock items and missions. Players investing time in bringing the Renaissance to Rome will definitely see the impact in the world itself, as well as the game play.

OPS: How do you progress/evolve in multiplayer?

VP: If you are familiar with online games, you will feel comfortable with our approach. The more effective you are during your gameplay session, the more experience you will get. By attaining a certain amount of experience, you will reach a new level and unlock extra content. The extra content you unlock will add variety and options, meaning that you can still beat someone that has a higher level than you, and the fight will be fair. For example during our beta, you will unlock one ability slot, and the disguise ability (you transform into another player's skin to confuse them) at level 2. Later on you will unlock more slots and different abilities including passive abilities that will boost your speed, allow you to blend faster, etc. We will also include a specific progression system that we will reveal later on.

OPS: What will we see in the multiplayer beta?

VP: Well if you are one of the lucky few to take part in the beta, you will be able to discover all elements shown at E3 and won awards for best multiplayer. This means you will have the Wanted mode, eight characters, different abilities (active and passive). The beta will also feature several maps that were not revealed at E3, including an indoor map. You will also be able to test our progression system, with a specific leveling curve for our beta. And last but not least, you will be able to unlock lots of elements, that is, if you have the skills required....

OPS: How many characters will we see in total?

VP: You will have 14 characters in the final game, without counting exclusive characters – collector's edition, pre order, etc. Each of them will have several colors, evolutions, their own move set, signature moves and weapon. ➤

FACEPALM

Status updates from the digital elite



Crash Bandicoot

Am I the only one who's noticed animals aren't getting as much game time as we used to?

4 hours ago • Comment • Like



Ty By jingos, cobber. You're dead right on the money!

4 hours ago • Report



Ratchet What the hell did he just say? @Crash. Uh, YOU'RE just not getting as much game time as you used to.

4 hours ago • Report



Ty Strewth!

4 hours ago • Report



Kuma Ratchet's right, Crash - what the hell DID he just say? Plus, you should be in a fighting game, it's a freakin' goldmine.

4 hours ago • Report



Ty Bloody oath!

4 hours ago • Report



Crash Bandicoot Oh. Well, what about platform games? Not many of those around!

4 hours ago • Report



Ty Fair dinkum!

4 hours ago • Report



Prinny Look, dood, I've been in my own radical platformer AND I had a sequel out in Japan. I work hard for my paycheck, dood!

4 hours ago • Report



Ty Crikey!

4 hours ago • Report



Daxter Can someone please shut him up?

4 hours ago • Report



Sonic Hey Crash. It helps if you have just one developer and publishing company looking after you. Peace out! S.

4 hours ago • Report



Ty Don't come the raw prawn with me!

4 hours ago • Report



Crash Bandicoot Hey, Crocodile Dundee? Would you can it? You do know I'm also an Australian marsupial, right? You're not fooling anyone! Sad face.

4 hours ago • Report



Ty Well I'll be stuffed! Time to hit the turps!

4 hours ago • Report

SCREENTEST

Your favourite games as movies

BAYONETTA

Hell in high heels



The Director

Sam Raimi

The Plot

A shapeshifting witch with a radical hairdo wakes up from the bottom of a lake and battles angels, whilst searching for the other of two gems that justify the correct passage of time. This is the most succinct version of the story we could muster within a sentence that obeys general grammar rules. On the way she has to fight fellow Umbra Witch Jeanne, tonnes of Angels, and deal with the Lumen Sages with some wild acrobatic moves and ridiculous gunplay.

The Pitch

Like a Lynx commercial crossed with a Beyonce videoclip, and the scraps of that fight scene in *Iron Man 2* starring Scarlett Johansson (that anyone with a wedding tool is probably still marginally moist over).

Green Light or Development Hell?

Visually spectacular and very titillating, all the money's going to be spent on costumes and CGI rather than a decent screenplay. What makes *Bayonetta* so appealing though is its nods to other games its creators have worked on, so as long as there's enough nods and winks the more savvy consumers will pore over it. Plus, Bayonetta herself has the right mix of intelligence, attitude and, er, photogenic qualities. Show enough skin (but not too much) and every teenage boy with a poster of a *Sports Illustrated* model on his wall or mobile phone will drive this to box office success. Margaret and David will hate it, though.

Best Line:

Bayonetta: "I'll... how do the Americans put it? Oh yes, 'Bust a cap in yo ass'."

The Cast:

Christina Hendricks as the sultry Bayonetta

Michael Clarke Duncan as weapons dealer Rodin

Joe Pesci as the annoying, comic-relief sidekick Enzo

Christina Applegate as Jeanne, Bayonetta's fellow witch

David Bowie as Baldur, game antagonist and plot twist

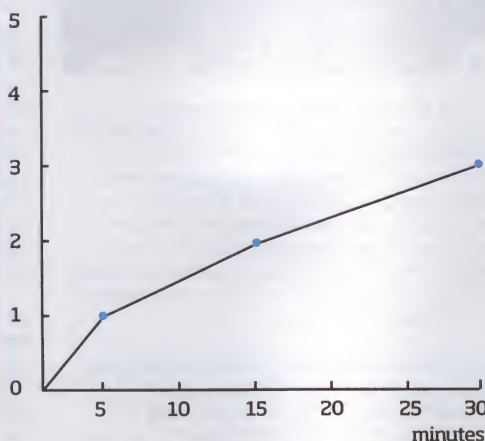
"I'll... how do the Americans put it? Oh yes, 'Bust a cap in yo ass'"

BAYONETTA



OFF THE CHARTS

Actual time spent playing Versus The amount of times you say, "Just five more minutes"



SEPARATED AT BIRTH!



NO. 20 Dude looks like a lady - Justin Bieber and Dante

Baby-faced Bieber and Dante both need a haircut, and they both have a smug pout. They're both manufactured, and neither has a single hair on their chest. Both have sold millions of copies of their respective titles, and they both seem to be popular with girls. Plus, they look like girls. We're also sure that, as long as there are saps looking for bland pop songs, there'll be a fourth Bieber album.

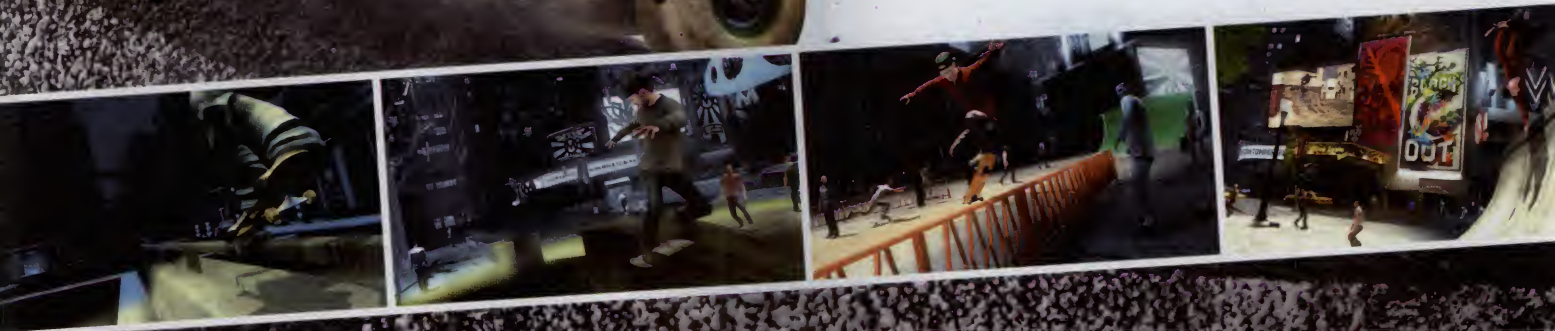
INFOCUS

SHAUN WHITE
SKATEBOARDING

White, who won his second gold medal in the halfpipe at the Vancouver Winter Games earlier this year, just took out the skateboard vert title at the Dew Tour's Portland stop. The killer move that totally snared him the title? The Armadillo.

The Armadillo, technically, is a frontside heel-flip body varial 540. White's apparently the only one to have landed one. The Armadillo will be one of 80 or so tricks hand-picked by White for inclusion in the game of his name.

Moving away from the natural realism of the Skate series, *Shaun White Skateboarding* sees you altering the world as you progress through it. Players can stretch and twist handrails to dizzying heights, morph streets into ramps and much more.



TOP 10

MEMORABLE INANIMATE OBJECTS

You've probably used or seen these items and never really considered their importance.

However, all of them are there for a reason, and they're integral to your favourite games.

1

GNOME, *HALF LIFE 2: EPISODE 2*

This tricky little bastard is found at the start of *Half-Life Episode 2* (which you'll find in *The Orange Box*) and with the right amount of perseverance, skill and luck he can be taken right to the end and launched into space. Having to juggle a garden ornament with a crowbar and pistol in a world gone to shit is pretty absurd, but the gnome is the epitome of doing something just because you can. We did it. We're not that proud of it though.



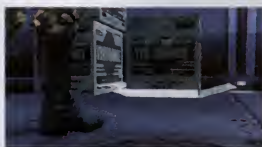
2



COMPANION CUBE, *PORTAL*

Recognisable for the love-heart shape on all its faces, the weighted companion cube in *Portal* paradoxically brings a human element to a sterile world, though your time together is painfully short. It does nothing different to other cubes and your relationship is only forged because of snapshots of illustrations left by someone else who was trapped in the Aperture Science labs.

3



CARDBOARD BOX, *METAL GEAR SOLID*

Sneak's incredible disguise is a series trademark. Without it, you'd be stuck for a handy (if tactically limited) hiding spot, and it also functions as a method to be rapidly transported between areas in *Snake Eater*. Check out *Peace Walker* for the largest collection of boxes ever; they're mostly ridiculous.

4



INK RIBBON, *RESIDENT EVIL*

Dotted around the creepy mansion were these tins of ink ribbons that held the only device that could let you save your progress at specially placed typewriters, as though the character you were controlling were writing their memoirs and picking up their progress from that point. Each ribbon was a godsend and while its an archaic system it was unique.

5



EXPLOSIVE BARRELS, ANY SHOOTER OR ACTION GAME

A good level designer will use the shape of the environment or give visual clues by having recurring colour themes running throughout the game, telling you where you should go. A big, red, barrel is an invitation to shoot it for maximum explosions – that's just part of the language of gaming.

6



HIDDEN PACKAGES, *OPEN WORLD GAMES*

Even the most serious, big-budget title has them and they remind you that this is a game, something measurable that either bestows an in-game reward or respect with your fellow gamers. Best examples of hidden packages are the diamonds in *Far Cry 2*, or *GTAIII*'s, er, hidden packages.

7



TAPE RECORDER, *BIOSHOCK*

The reasons for your presence in Rapture are only explained towards the end of the game. Since your character doesn't have a voice (well, after the short intro) and mainly interacts with characters that want him dead, these tape recorders offer a lot of insight into the doomed city. Like hidden packages there's a lot of satisfaction in finding all of them.

8



CHECKPOINT GATE, *SONIC 2* (SEGA COLLECTION)

Every game (except for *Demon's Souls*) has checkpoints mid-level. Most often you'll just go past an invisible, digital marker without realising it. Sonic's gold-and-red beacon is something to strive for and, although each level is less than five minutes long, they're essential on those awful underwater stages.

9



CONCRETE DONKEY, *WORMS*

This is kinda cheating since it's a weapon but we'll let it through on the wackiness clause. Dropped from the sky it's one of the most powerful devices available and its effect is immediate. Why a donkey? Why is concrete considered so devastating? The device is deceptive, initially surprising but always hilarious. We just wish it was lampooned more in other games.

10



THIS CAR, *STREET FIGHTER II*

You've flown around the world for a tournament to prove you're the greatest warrior in the world, and are quickly demolishing the best each country has to offer. And then you get to smash up a car – a really nice one, too – that isn't in the way or even tied into the story. It gives you nothing. We love it, and wish there were more events like this.

INFOCUS

GRAN TURISMO 5

More *Gran Turismo* 5 details and screens have been released at this year's gamescom in Germany mere moments before our final deadline. We'll bring you an in-depth analysis next issue but the main announcements were the debut of go-karts in the series and the hugely exciting course maker.

The course maker allows players to select certain set parameters to create your own track. A theme can be selected, such as

the Belgian High Fens or Toscana region for example, and individual track sectors can then be defined. You can edit the frequency and sharpness of curves and corners and alter the degree of topography and camber with a set of sliders. Yamauchi created a 10km cross-country burn through Belgium countryside to demonstrate.

Meanwhile, check out the insane detail in these classic Le Mans racers, plus the humble go kart, on this page.



AROUND THE WORLD **IN PS3**

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming

LARKSPUR, CA, USA
NAUGHTY BEAR

A curious black bear climbed inside a man's car, put the gearstick into neutral and sent it rolling down a hill and crashing it into a tree. The sound of the horn blaring – as well as the sight of a bear wearing a collar, tie and hat and yelling something about a "pic-er-nic basket" – alerted the car's owners. When they got to the bottom of the hill they discovered that a peanut butter sandwich on the back seat was what lured the bear.

WEST VIRGINIA, USA
Z FOR VICTORY

Trying to figure out your work-PlayStation-sleep balance? Seven is the lucky number for the latter. Researchers at West Virginia University looked at data from a study of more than 30,000 people and found that sleeping for less than five hours a day, including naps, doubles the risk of angina, heart attack, stroke or coronary heart disease. However, sleeping more than seven hours increases the chance of cardiovascular disease.

SETAUKET, NEW YORK STATE, USA
THE FARCE UNLEASHED

Possibly trying to raise funds for a new Death Star, a man dressed as Darth Vader demanded cash from a teller inside a Chase bank branch. He wasn't able to fully commit to the Darth role as he waived a gun around instead of a lightsaber. Despite this he did manage to scarp with an amount of cash. Police say he's part of an outbreak of robbers who are unusually dressed.

LONDON, ENGLAND
UFOLOLWHUT?

And you thought aliens were a work of fiction. The National Archives in Britain has released files that show Sir Winston Churchill ordered a 50-year cover-up of incident between a RAF pilot and a UFO during WWII where the pilot was "approached by a metallic UFO". The files also contain dozens of eye-witness statements, sketches and classified briefing notes that detail reports of sightings all across Britain.

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA
TOTALLY SHAFTED

A man trying to Sam Fisher his way through a ventilation shaft at Melbourne's Crown Casino became stuck, and spent a night trapped until the casino's restaurant staff heard him calling for help. According to the ambulance officer who had to rescue the man, "Fortunately, he was covered head to toe in grease so pulling him out was easier than first anticipated." It's unknown whether he was trying to get in or out.

INTERNATIONAL CHARTS



UK

Source: ELSPA

- 1 Modern Warfare 2 Activision
- 2 Red Dead Redemption Rockstar
- 3 Toy Story 3 Disney
- 4 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11 EA
- 5 Battlefield: Bad Company 2 EA
- 6 Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands Ubisoft
- 7 Just Cause 2 Square Enix
- 8 International Cricket 2010 Codemasters
- 9 LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4 Warner Bros.
- 10 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa EA



JAPAN

Source: VGCHARTZ

- 1 Sengoku Basara 3 Capcom
- 2 Jikkyou Powerful Pro Yakyuu 2010 Konami
- 3 ModNation: Mugen no Kart Oukoku Sony
- 4 Assassin's Creed II Ubisoft
- 5 Shirokishi Monogatari Sony
- 6 World Soccer Winning Eleven 2010 Konami
- 7 Pro Yakyuu Spirits 2010 Konami
- 8 Ken to Mahou to Gakuen Mono. 2G Acquire
- 9 Super Street Fighter IV Capcom
- 10 Atelier Totori Gust



USA

Source: NPD

- 1 Assassin's Creed II Ubisoft
- 2 Red Dead Redemption Rockstar
- 3 Modern Warfare 2 Activision
- 4 NCAA Football 11 EA
- 5 God of War III Sony
- 6 Darksiders THQ
- 7 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves Sony
- 8 Grand Theft Auto IV Rockstar
- 9 Fallout 3 Bethesda
- 10 Battlefield: Bad Company 2 EA



TOM CLANCY'S

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www.hawxgame.com



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New features include take-off, silent UAV control, gunship attack, night missions and more



Jump straight into the action with 4 player story co-op or 8 player adversarial modes

DEMO ALSO AVAILABLE!

*Demo available on the Playstation Network and Xbox Live

OUT NOW

PG

Mild violence.
Gaming experience
may change online



PS3

PlayStation 3



PlayStation Network



XBOX 360

XBOX
LIVE

PC
DVD
ROM



UBISOFT

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PRE-ORDER PARADISE

The hottest deals, the coolest stuff – what are you waiting for?

GRAN TURISMO 5

There'll be two special versions of GT5 for limited edition junkies.

Collector's Edition

- Exclusive Special Edition inlay sleeve art
- 200+ page 'Apex' driver's magazine with hints on driving technique, car tuning, future technologies and more
- Five Collector's Edition artcards featuring exclusive artwork
- In-game 'ChromeLine' vehicle pack: five performance-enhanced cars
- Exclusive dynamic XMB theme

Signature Edition

A luxury edition that ships in a contoured steel case. As well as the game, the 'Apex' driver's magazine and the ChromeLine car pack, you'll get:

- An exclusive, branded Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG 1:43 scale model car
- A GT leather wallet and metal key fob
- A Signature Edition coffee table book
- A bespoke *Gran Turismo 5* USB key
- Six additional in-game 'Stealth' cars
- The chance to win a real-life Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG – your very own gull-winged, 6.3-litre-engined supercar – in a competition like no other!

JB HIFI

Standard \$109
Collector's \$129
Signature \$299
Estimated dispatch date:
November 2010

GAME

Standard \$99
(web only price)
Collector's \$128
Signature \$298
(web only price)
Estimated dispatch date:
November 2010

EB GAMES

Standard \$118
Collector's \$128
Signature \$298
Estimated dispatch date:
November 2010

MEDAL OF HONOR

Got an itch that's *not* the incredible bushranger beard you've been cultivating for the past few months? Perhaps it's your trigger finger. If so, this game should scratch it. Inspired by the actions of a secret group of elite warriors, known as Tier 1 operators, *Medal of Honor* is set during the 2001 War in Afghanistan.

Limited Edition includes:

- Instant access to three weapons: MP7, TOZ-194 and 870MC2
- Access to *Battlefield 3* beta
- HD remastered *Medal of Honor: Frontline* (exclusive to PS3)

EB GAMES \$108

Special offer: The *Tier 1 Edition* is exclusive to EB Games. It includes instant access to the Assault Class Tier 1 bearded operator, the M60 and Spec Ops Class Camouflage
Estimated dispatch date:
14/10/2010

JB HIFI \$109

Estimated dispatch date:
14/10/2010

GAME \$89

Estimated dispatch date:
14/10/2010 (web only price, not available in store)



FALLOUT NEW VEGAS

As you battle your way across the heat-blasted Mojave Wasteland, the colossal Hoover Dam, and the neon drenched Vegas Strip, you'll be introduced to a colourful cast of characters, special weapons, mutants and much more.

Collector's Edition includes:

- A hardcover graphic novel: *All Roads*
- "Lucky 7" poker chips
- "Lucky 38" platinum chip
- The Making of *Fallout: New Vegas* on DVD
- A *Fallout: New Vegas* deck of cards

GAME: \$144

Lightweight leather armour, sturdy caravan shotgun, four repair kits, binoculars

Estimated dispatch date:
22/10/2010 (web only price, not available in store)

EB GAMES: \$148

Armoured Vault 13 suit, weathered 10mm pistol, Vault 13 canteen, five stimpacks

Estimated dispatch date:
22/10/2010

JB HIFI: \$149

Lightweight metal armour, mercenary grenade rifle, three super stimpacks, three doctor's bags

Estimated dispatch date:
22/10/2010

VANQUISH

Players take the role of Sam, a government agent kitted out with a futuristic battle suit, in this over-the-top third-person shooter from the creators of *Bayonetta*. Set in a near future world where the USA and Russia are at war over the planet's remaining energy resources. The US has constructed a space station in order to harness energy from the sun. Russian forces capture this space station and divert its harvested solar energy into a blast wave that destroys San Francisco, aiming to force the US into a total and unconditional surrender. In response, the US tasks its armed forces with recapturing the space station before the Russians can annihilate their next target – New York.

Pre-order bonus, available at selected retailers:

- Tri Weapon Pack: Three downloadable weapons for use in the game (boost machine gun, laser cannon, anti-armour pistol)



DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO

Tanner's back. Take to the streets of San Francisco in the hunt for Jericho, your arch villain, in over 100 different cars. Using a unique 'shift' feature, *Driver: San Francisco* promises to be the ultimate car chase game, with the iconic city as your playground for action.

Collector Pack includes:

- 1970 Dodge Challenger R/T model
- Map of San Francisco
- Two in-game vehicles

GAME \$129.95

Estimated Dispatch Date: TBA 2011
Special Offer: *Driver* fuzzy dice

EB GAMES \$128

Estimated Dispatch Date: TBA 2011



INSIDE EVERY MACHINE BEATS THE HEART OF MAN.



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XBOX 360

XBOX
LIVE

PS3

PlayStation
Network

THE WAY
nVIDIA
IT'S MEANT TO BE PLAYED

nVIDIA
3D VISION
READY

PLAYS BEST ON
ALPHAWARE

SQUARE ENIX

M

Violence

THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and goodness!

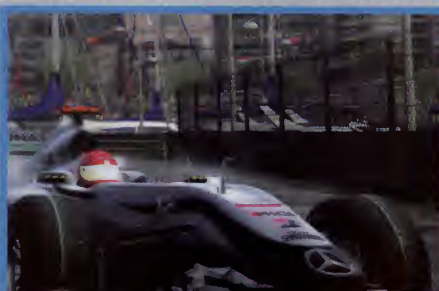
AUGUST 27
**MAFIA II:
 COLLECTORS EDITION**

Step aside Niko Bellic. Vito, an Italian immigrant, had the idea way before you to go to American and live the American dream. As you descend into the world of organised crime, Vito will try to make a name for himself – and yes, Don is good.



SEPTEMBER 9 **H.A.W.X. 2**

Less 'chicks away' and more 'tango on your tail' as you take your multi-million-dollar bird to the sky and back in this thrilling flight sim. You'll also fly a stack of military hardware like the boom-tastic AC-130.



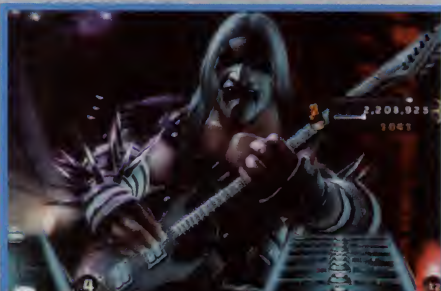
SEPTEMBER 23 **F1 2010**

With jaw-dropping visuals, a dynamic weather system that changes ever race, official drivers, teams and tracks, *F1 2010* is sure to roar in your living room with a new level of realism. Go Webber, you magnificent bastard!



SEPTEMBER 25 **AFL GRAND FINAL**

The 114th annual championship is held today at the MCG in Melbourne. We're still tipping the Cats to be there. Feel free to disagree. Then again, most of us live in NSW – so what do we know, huh?



SEPTEMBER 29 **GUITAR HERO:
 WARRIORS OF ROCK**

It's buy-twist-top-beer-and-invite-friends-over time to show them that you're not just an awesome air guitarist. Packed with a whole bunch of new stuff.



OCTOBER 3 **NRL GRAND FINAL**

The second part to final's fever as the Dragons and some other team face each other at the ANZ stadium. With an expected crowd of 80,000 there'll be plenty of encouragement for the two teams as they battle.



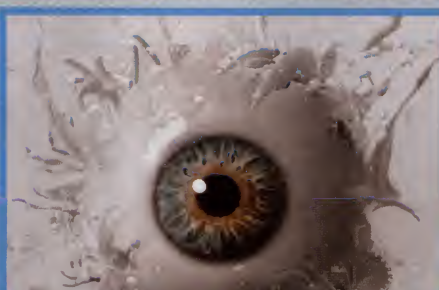
OCTOBER 14 **MEDAL OF HONOR**

You are part of group called Tier 1 – a level above the most highly trained and skilled Special Operations Forces. At least one has a beard to rival Grizzly Adams. Prepare to jump into the combat in the most hostile conditions ever.



OCTOBER 21 **FALLOUT NEW VEGAS**

Vegas is experiencing some nuclear fallout and players are set to battle their way across a heat-blasted Mojave Desert. We're hoping the Mythbusters will make an appearance and help us blow stuff up.



OCTOBER 22 **SAW 3D**

Back with its seventh instalment, *Saw* is set to wrap up the series with even more twisted traps and story, where Jigsaws survivors seek counseling from a self-help mentor. Things obviously don't go as planned



OCTOBER 28 **RED**

Based on the DC Comics graphic novel, four CIA agents are framed for an assassination. They must find out who set them up – and stay alive long enough to uncover one of the biggest conspiracies in government history.

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Coming soon to a store near you!

OUT NOW

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days
Genre: Action
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Mafia II
Genre: Action
Distributor: 2K

Madden NFL 11
Genre: Sports
Distributor: EA

SEPTEMBER

Rugby League Live
Genre: Sports
Distributor: HES

Formula 1 2010
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow
Genre: Action
Distributor: Mindscape

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock
Genre: Music
Distributor: Activision

R.U.S.E.
Genre: RTS
Distributor: Ubisoft

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions
Genre: Action
Distributor: Activision

Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2
Genre: Flight
Distributor: Ubisoft

Shaun White Skateboarding
Genre: Sports
Distributor: Ubisoft

OCTOBER

Dead Rising 2
Genre: Action
Distributor: THQ

WRC
Genre: Racing
Distributor: AFA

International Cricket 2010
Genre: Sports
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

F.3.A.R.
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Warner Bros.

Fallout: New Vegas
Genre: RPG
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Splatterhouse
Genre: Action
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Medal of Honor
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: EA

Vanquish
Genre: Action
Distributor: Sega

NBA Elite 11
Genre: Sports
Distributor: Sega

NOVEMBER

The Last Guardian
Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Sony

Gran Turismo 5
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Sony

Call of Duty: Black Ops
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Activision

Need For Speed Hot Pursuit
Genre: Racing
Distributor: EA

Assassin's Creed Brotherhood
Genre: Action
Distributor: Ubisoft

DECEMBER

Crysis 2
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: EA

TBA 2010

AFL 10
Genre: Sports
Distributor: Sony

DJ Hero 2
Genre: Music
Distributor: Activision

James Bond 007: Blood Stone
Genre: Action
Distributor: Activision

Rock Band 3
Genre: Music
Distributor: EA

EA Sports MMA
Genre: Sports
Distributor: EA

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II
Genre: Action
Distributor: Activision

SOCOM 4
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Sony

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom
Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

TBA 2011

Spec Ops: The Line
Genre: Action
Distributor: 2K

L.A. Noire
Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Rockstar

Max Payne 3
Genre: Action
Distributor: Rockstar

Bulletstorm
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: EA

Agent
Genre: Action
Distributor: Rockstar

inFamous 2
Genre: Action
Distributor: Sony

Deus Ex: Human Revolution
Genre: Action
Distributor: Ubisoft

Driver: San Francisco
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Ubisoft

Test Drive Unlimited 2
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Portal 2
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: EA

True Crime: Hong Kong
Genre: Action
Distributor: Activision

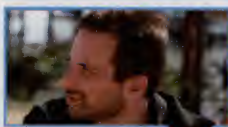
Batman: Arkham City
Genre: Action
Distributor: Warner Bros.

LOCAL CHARTS

- Red Dead Redemption**
Genre: Adventure Distributor: Rockstar
- Modern Warfare 2**
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Activision
- Toy Story 3**
Genre: Family Distributor: EA
- Battlefield: Bad Company 2**
Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA
- Just Cause 2**
Genre: Action Distributor: NBP
- Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands**
Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft
- Assassin's Creed II**
Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft
- LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4**
Genre: Adventure Distributor: Warner Bros.
- 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa**
Genre: Sports Distributor: EA
- ModNation Racers**
Genre: Racing Distributor: Sony

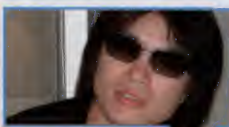
“QUOTE UNQUOTE”

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"We don't get a cost benefit for being photorealistic, it's the same reason Pixar's not photorealistic, you just end up creepy"

Irrational Games' Ken Levine on *BioShock Infinite*.



"From here on out, we should pursue what makes games interesting and fun."

Team Ninja's Tomonobu Itagaki on shifting focus from hardware to, y'know, making games in general.



"I was stupid. I sold completely because I didn't understand Wall Street. In retrospect, I really wish I hadn't sold it."

Nolan Bushnell expresses regret in selling his company Atari in 1976.



"If what happens with video games is not roughly analogous to what happens in other areas, that seems silly."

Tony Abbott responds to a question about the lack of an R18+ rating.



OPINION

ANOTHER DAY AT THE OFFICE

Dan Carson didn't mind paperwork. As Club Secretary of Forgotten Male Leads Looking for a Fair Break (the FML for short) it was his responsibility to get the new member's details and assess their likelihood of finding a new job. From there it went to Wikipedia, and it was mostly up to the individual to make the rest happen. The lucky ones found something new but many of the FML would just linger there indefinitely, their name cropping up on 'whatever happened to' lists. Fine for used copy sales, but not great for generating income.

Carson knew his place. Since he'd fought Nazis in New York all he had was the FML; some of the guys were supportive, stoic. Others had been there so long that he wondered if it'd take a new console generation or two until they were re-hired.

Before he could dwell any more on what

lay ahead the door to his office rocketed open, its lock cartwheeled through the air. Carson tumbled off his chair, mug of coffee still in hand. As he picked himself up, wiping the searing liquid from his face, a large man was already sitting in the chair opposite him with his boots propped up on the desk. He stank of cigar smoke and wore the smell of grandeur like cheap, nasty cologne.

"Christ alive! Who the hell are you?!" spluttered Carson, his overalls stained with coffee.

"I'm Duke Nukem, baby," said Nukem, sucking on his Gran Corona.

"What the bloody hell do you think you're doing? Can't you just knock?"

Nukem cocked his head and jabbed a finger at his boots.

"Me and my size thirteens have kicked more alien ass than you've wiped your own, shit stain, but this is the first time I've been able to kick down a door – and damn it feels good. Now gimme this bee-ess form – there's a thousand horny babes just waitin' for ol' Duke."

Carson was fuming. He'd heard of Duke Nukem and already hated him, but was

also a little jealous of his success. He was a development parasite who'd managed to wrangle an incredible amount of sequels, and the bastards kept selling. He didn't know whether to call in Gabe Logan to get this oaf out of his office or process his form to make his afternoon easier. He settled on the latter.

An hour later Carson was cleaning up cigar ash, cursing at Nukem's lack of respect. Everything he'd suspected had been confirmed. This was an egomaniac that was grossly sexist and only concerned about his own universe with little regard for anyone else. The man was vile.

He looked back over at the form and swore again, this time at the conclusion he'd been forced to make. After assessing Nukem's history, checking news stories, rabid forums and realising that his cockiness never, ever subsided he'd written six words that made him wonder if he'd ever understand gamers again.

Chance of finding new work: high.

Carson just didn't understand.

“Nukem cocked his head and jabbed a finger at his boots”

Paul Taylor thinks if any studio could get *Duke Nukem Forever* done, it's Gearbox.

ENSLAVED

ODYSSEY TO THE WEST

THE ODYSSEY BEGINS OCTOBER 8TH 2010

Relive the classic story of *Monkey: Journey to the West*.
Featuring dramatic cut scenes co-directed by **Andy Serkis** (*Lord of the Rings*, *King Kong*), co-written by **Alex Garland** (*The Beach*, *28 Days Later*), and music created by **Nitin Sawhney**.

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Violence

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PS3

PlayStation Network

XBOX 360

XBOX LIVE



namco

OPINION

HOW I COULD JUST
KILL A MAN

It's all gone horribly wrong.

I've found myself agreeing – at least, in a very limited capacity – with a high-powered Hollywood director who recently launched into a typically ill-informed tirade about the limitations of videogames as a genre.

Mike Newell, the UK director of the *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* adaptation, believes games cannot convey emotion or storytelling like movies. This I don't agree with.

Newell admits, "When the discussion turns to the minutiae of the games, it begins now to bore the arse off me, frankly."

This I can't get behind either.

On human drama he claims "the video game cannot do that. The video game can do all sorts of face-pulling, all sorts of: 'I am a bad man, I have a mean jagged sword,' but it can't do any more than that."

This is bogus too. It's an attitude I hate. Basically, his non-interest in video games means that all video games cannot convey human emotion to anybody.

"I left more than 1000 piles of meat all over the Frontier without sparing a single one a second thought"

Still, just when it appeared that I might disagree with every sentence that leaked from his wordhole, he dropped this nugget.

"I know, when I look at my 14-year-old's glazed eyes, that killing 3,000 Brazilians doesn't mean anything, really."

He's actually right on that one.

I'm assuming his kid is playing *Modern Warfare 2* or is some kind of time-traveller who used his unique gift to leap into the future and bring back a copy of *Max Payne 3*. He was peculiarly specific about Brazilians.

Nonetheless, Newell is spot-on. I was watching a child play a violent open-world game the other day. I couldn't really tell how old it was, nor who it belonged to. I'm just glad it wasn't mine. It didn't complete one, solitary objective; it just walked about shooting every single person it looked at.

It did it with such casual indifference it was difficult to tell if it was even enjoying itself. The bare expression on its face looked like the kind of blank look one might adopt while mowing the lawn or scraping flecks of hardened dog turd from the bottom of your shoe. Watching this kid slay waves of innocent digital civilians I felt uncomfortable. The way you feel when you're watching a movie with your nan and the stars suddenly

nude up and start boofing each other.

Videogames aren't going to turn this kid into a serial killer but its utterly businesslike approach to ritual slaughter was weird. What's it going to take in the future to shock a kid like this? Is this the generation that will grow up and be at a complete and genuine loss to see why anybody had a problem with the airport massacre level in *Modern Warfare 2*?

Of course, if it were mine, it wouldn't be playing games designed exclusively for adults. But that's another discussion.

The problem is that, when there's too much to interactively 'kill', 'killing' itself becomes meaningless. John Marston's bodycount at the end of *Red Dead Redemption* was four figures. I left more than 1000 piles of meat all over the Frontier without sparing a

single one a second thought.

William Munny's bodycount at the end of *Unforgiven*, however,

is six or so. These murders carried more weight than the combined effect of 1000 hole-filled cowboy corpses in *Red Dead Redemption*.

It's a typical example of marketing doublespeak that I hate, but sometimes less is more.

Red Dead Redemption is a cracker of a game, no doubt. I'm not proposing we don't need games like it, nor am I proposing that it doesn't convey human drama in a believable way. It does. But *Red Dead* is the exception rather than the rule: a shooting gallery with depth. Most games are about as deep as wading pool. Movies ARE better at making death a big deal.

"It's a helluva thing, killing a man. You take away all he's got, and all he's gonna have," says William Munny in *Unforgiven*.

I know games can reflect this. They just need to prove it. Make me care about life and death.

Angry Sackboy is an ex-videogame journalist and is restricted to adults.



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OPINION

PUNCH OUT TIME

FOR COMPETITIVE ONLINE

Any competitive multiplayer, where you can't physically observe or smack the other guy, is a waste of time. I've given online adversarial multiplayer 17 years to straighten up and fly right – from two-player *Doom* using a 9600 baud modem to 256-player *MAG* via ADSL2 broadband – but I've finally realised it's never going to change.

The problems with online showdowns are threefold: douchebags, cheaters and OCD achievers.

“The problems with online showdowns are threefold: douchebags, cheaters and OCD achievers”

The first, douchebags, are a fairly self-explanatory group; bad winners, sore losers or just idiots being idiotic for the sake of idiocy. If you were playing a 12-person match in your house and DaBestKillah735 turned to you and said things linking your sister with farm animals you'd stop playing, snap his neck like a chicken and receive a generous round of high-fives for your manly use of irony. But in the online space that same trashtalking fool is protected by an almost impenetrable veil of distance and anonymity. And the coward knows it.

Next up, you have cheaters – the vilest scum this side of necrophiliacs or telemarketers. It would boggle your mind to know what some online folk do to get an underhanded upperhand. There's aim-bot code that guarantees headshots, autofire-modded controllers that turn pea-shooting pistols into machine guns and lag switches that disrupt the flow of data to make sure you're shooting at a player that “isn't there” any more. When I was 10 we had a neighbourhood *Street Fighter* tournament and there was a kid who kept pressing pause to disrupt everybody's super combos. He offered the argument that he was abusing a legitimate tactic to win. We offered him legitimate abuse in the form of an arm-rub burn that needed skin-grafts and a deadleg that had him in a wheelchair for a week.

Finally, we have the OCD achiever. If you ever pass on sleep, sunlight or sexual contact in order to memorise a virtual arena better than the people who designed it, you're no longer powered by skill – you're cursed with unnatural fixation. In local multiplayer – where you can physically see what your opponent looks like – such hideous sub-humans are easily identified and avoided thanks to their translucent skin, musky odour and horny twitch. Online, even the freaks can appear normal.

And this is why I'm all about online co-op with people I know. It's me and some mates versus hordes of AI communist space

zombies. We're helping each other out, we're busting heads and though we may rip on each other out of playfulness, it never gets out of hand. Mostly out of mutual respect; but also because we all know where the other guy lives and what time he goes to sleep.

Adam Mathew is prejudiced against douchebags. If you're a douchebag, and have a problem with this, write in and let him know. Be sure to include a return address.



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COMPETITIONS

WRITE IN, SCORE PRIZES!



WIN!

A COMPETITION YOU CAN'T REFUSE

Thanks to the good folk at 2K Games we have five *Mafia II* prize packs to give away, which include the *Mafia II* Collector's Editions and T-shirt. The *Mafia II* Collector's Edition is stacked with awesome goodies, including a copy of the game with SteelBook casing and the Made Man Pack that puts you behind the wheel of two classic cars as well as adding a smokin' tux to your wardrobe. There's also a hardcover art book that shows off the design process behind the

game, the orchestral soundtrack AND a map of Empire Bay. Plus you get a fancy T-shirt that can't be bought in stores!

For your chance to win this spectacular prize all you have to do is answer this question and follow the entry instructions below.

Question: In 25 words or less, tell us the best meal that a Mafioso can eat and why.



WIN!

UMBRELLA-IANT

Thanks to Sony Pictures Entertainment we have 10 prize packs that include a double in-season pass to see *Resident Evil: Afterlife* in 3D, an Umbrella Corporation Umbrella, and a *Resident Evil: Afterlife* backpack to give away!

This fourth *Resident Evil* movie is being directed by Paul W.S. Anderson and stars the incredible Milla Jovovich as Alice, who continues on her journey to find survivors and lead them to safety. Her deadly battle with the

Umbrella Corporation reaches new heights, but Alice gets some unexpected help from an old friend as they make their way to Los Angeles – which has been totally overrun by the undead!

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Question: In 25 words or less, how would you survive a zombie infestation in your town?

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SHAWSHANKED

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Hey OPS. Honestly, I'm frustrated. No scrap that, you can say that I'm pissed off.

I seriously can't get my head around how, yes there are good games, yes there are great games, but oh God are there some really disappointing games out there! I'm not talking about games that some might like and others may dislike, I'm talking about a sleeping pill on a disc.

Unfortunately, I picked up the game *Prison Break: The Conspiracy* before the issue with its review was released. And WOW did I pay for my mistake. Honestly, playing through the game was frustrating. I seriously don't think I've ever physically felt sick playing PlayStation before.

Now being a big fan of the TV series, I don't understand why publishers make these games. Like, think about it: 12-plus months would give publishers, testers and game designers ample time to realise that their product isn't really that good. Seriously, do they get halfway through making the game and think 'well, we're half way there, too late to turn back now'? Or do they sit at home after the game's completed, throw it in the PS3 and actually enjoy what they're playing? If they can do that with this game, I'd be very surprised.

Obviously if you make a game and spend quite a bit of time and money in its production, you would want a return in the end. How do these publishers look at their finished project and expect a high return? Are they honestly convinced that their game



➔ Get busy playin', or get busy lyin' (to the shop, as to whether the game works)

would make for a way better Christmas present than *Uncharted* or *CoD*? It was said in your mag a couple of months back that the gaming industry is ultimately a business and businesses aim to make money. This couldn't be more correct. So with that being said, how can publishers aim to gain a competitive advantage over their competitors with games that do not compare on any level with the high standard that has already been set by other games in the past?

Simple: If you know it's going to be a shit game and in turn will possibly soil the *Prison Break* franchise, DON'T MAKE IT!

The existence of these games are very limited but they do indeed exist and tend to pop up every now and then. Personally, I don't

believe that game adaptations such as *Prison Break* or *Lost* did their supporting TV shows any good. On the contrary, even as a fan of both the series, I found myself, three hours later, angrily tearing through my recycling bin looking for the receipt.

Abraham Chalhoub, via email

Abraham, we feel your pain. We don't tend to get 'bad' games before their release date. Plus, we're still rage-punching the walls over the missed opportunity that was 24: The Game on PS2.

Mind you, it made *Prison Break: The Conspiracy* look like *Metal Gear Solid 4*. Anyway, here's a good game to wash away the taste of a bad one. Enjoy!



Letter of the Month wins a copy of: **MEDAL OF HONOR**
Congratulations from EA and us, Abel! Grow that beard out too!

CUTTINGS

CARE FOR A SCARE?

Resident Evil 5 was an action game and about as scary as *LittleBigPlanet*. I expect survival horror from my *Resident Evil* games.

Blake Harrod, via Facebook

We won't argue with you.

GONE ROGUE

Know what game I found scary? *Rogue Warrior*. Because if they can make that into a game, they can make ANYTHING into a game. And that's scary.

Tiny Tim, via Facebook

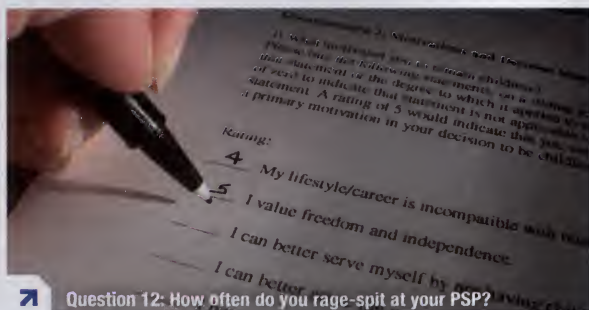
Man, what a dud game.

PRE-ORDERED

I feel equal parts embarrassed, and equal parts awesome for spending that much money on *Black Ops* Prestige Edition.

Cameron Mills, via Facebook

Us too.



➔ Question 12: How often do you rage-spit at your PSP?

IS IT A FUMBLER FANTASY?

I am a 23 year old male, with a wife, one-year-old kid, and a job with many hours and little pay. That however, has not stopped me from spending some time playing on my PS3 now and then. But it is not getting easier, prices of some new titles reaching \$120. I live in a place too remote for good Internet. Even the best satellite Internet options here are not good enough for gaming. This of course knocks out buying some games I would desperately love to have. *Modern Warfare 2* is amazing, but I can't pay that much for something I will finish too quickly in campaign. But, my savior arrived.

Enter *Final Fantasy XIII*. A game that we patiently awaited.

As a kid, our family could not afford much, and I had to use my cousin's PS2 when we visited. We played games like *Rollcage*, *Timesplitters* and a few other fun titles. But the title that got me hooked, was *Final Fantasy VIII*. I was never interesting in PlayStation up until that magic moment.

I still haven't played more than 20 minutes of *FFXIII*, plainly because I am scared. The beginning didn't WOW me. I am very loyal to the PS3, and *FF* titles (mainly because my Xbox 360 froze a lot, and the disc didn't work properly, and I am scared if I use it again, it will flash red). I have been playing *FIFA 10*, just to fill in time. A whole season already. And I am getting up the courage to see if my dreams of the perfect RPG are shattered.

Onto other things now, and I think congratulations are in order. I took a part in the survey you guys put on Facebook. It was the best, least vague, most simple survey I have ever taken. I would never do something like that after a late one at work, and most certainly not one with that many questions. But it was a survey that didn't feel like you were doing your taxes. Brilliant work guys. Over and out.

Michael Williams, via email

Cheers Michael, we worked hard on that survey, as we ourselves hate taking surveys designed to bore people to tears. Speaking of being bored to tears, *FFXIII* isn't that bad. It's better than *Prison Break*.

SPEAK TO US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games — on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback
The Media Factory
PO Box 20154
World Square,
NSW 2002

ops@citrusmedia.com.au

...and also on Facebook!
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SWANSONG OF THE SOLOIST?

So, only just recently (and not before its time) I became the proud owner of my very own ADSL connection. Up until then I had gotten by with a mobile broadband "dongle" that was slower than my first dial-up modem and horribly limited my gaming possibilities.

I made do, well enough, with *Mirror's Edge*, *GTA IV* and more recently, *Red Dead Redemption*. I even bought *Modern Warfare 2* knowing full well I would be limited to the single player campaign (which still stands as a FPS storyline milestone in my book) dispersed with occasional split screen, or co-op.

Since becoming connected however, I'm finding online features are playing an increasingly greater part in my consideration for future purchases, and I've had to halt myself.

I appreciate that online gaming is not entirely new, however it's only in the most recent generation of consoles that it's really become mainstream and an integral part of our gaming lifestyle. What worries me is that things like storyline and character progression are going to take a backseat to something that was until only recently unavailable and not expected.

Games are already being made specifically with online in mind, *LittleBigPlanet*, *MAG*, and some *SOCOM* game that appeared to be "PSN only". I have friends that have owned *MW2* since release and have never touched the single player campaign at all.



➤ The future will auto-fit to your taste

If no-one is crying out for this anymore, will developers bypass single player epics and pander to the desire of the masses? It may be the irrational ramblings of a madman, but if *Red Dead* really is the last of the old west, as far as single player epics are concerned, I'm going to go to my room and cry.

Jeremy Scott, via email

Will single-player eventually fall by the wayside? Yes and no. We have a feeling that online co-op is going to continue to grow and flourish to a point where, technically, yes you can play a campaign by yourself in an offline mode, but there'll always be the option in place to include someone else in the journey too.

That seems like the sensible way to go because – as Adam's opinion piece this month indicates – not everybody digs on the concept of constant adversarial multiplayer. Gameplay variety is the spice of a player's life and it's generally in the single-player modes where developers try to evolve and innovate new mechanics.



➤ The Thunder-Smurf looked good in 3D

THE THIRD PLACE?

What up OPS?

I'm a long time subscriber and just want to say keep up the amazing work and stuff. What I wanted to talk about was the emergence of 3D TVs and gaming. Now, do you guys think this will revolutionise gaming and become a norm in the future, or is it simply a gimmick?

I've never experienced it myself, so I don't know if the visual aspect of it is enough to attract consumers. But there are obviously other factors which could deter people from experiencing 3D gaming, such as the price. HD TVs are crazy-awesome cheap right now, while these 3D TVs are a fair bit more pricier.

For me personally, I would rather buy the HD rather than 3D basically because I ain't rich. Could cheaper alternatives kill the 3D television? So, I know you guys have seen what 3D gaming has to offer, specifically *Avatar*, so what does the future of 3D gaming look like?

Mark Fox, via email

You want to know what does the future looks like? It looks like *burning*.

For some people at least.

Honestly, we've only played a handful of games in 3D and for the most part it didn't knock our socks off. Especially not enough to make us sell our work experience kid's kidneys to pay off six percent of a 3D TV.

Our issues with the technology are multiple: the glasses are expensive and make you look like a hipster doofus, the experience can blur on-screen peripheral objects in a distracting way and some folks swear the tech hurts their eyes and gives them hangover-like headaches.

Call us crazy, but we'd rather drop the same amount of cash on a regular 100 inch HDTV that doesn't do 3D. And if the cosmos says that we should get a hangover headache, it seems unfair that we'll be denied the epic drunkenness beforehand.

That said, *GT5* isn't out yet. Maybe that'll change our minds.



➤ Helloo ladies.

THE OPS FACEBOOK PAGE NEEDS YOU!

If you're on Facebook and you read the mag (which you're doing *right now*), join our fan page for exclusive competitions, breaking news and intelligent banter with other gamers, fans and the guys who make this award-winning publication. Search for *Official PlayStation Magazine – Australia*, or go to facebook.com/OPSAustralia, and get involved!

STOREFRONT

We play the games so you can pick the cream from the crock. What deliciousness have you bought lately?



Chris 'Lemon' Lovell
Earthworm Jim HD

"It's so fun online with mates."



David Brady
Joe Danger

"One of the best PSN purchases I have ever made. For \$20 you get copious amounts of fun and hilarity."



Chris Luck
ModNation Racers

"I'm loving it"

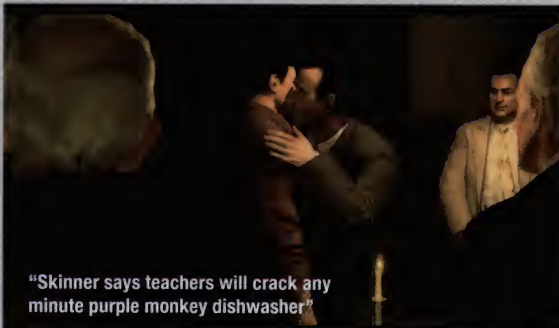


Harrison 'Sam' Vesey
GTAV

"GTAV for \$30 at the EB mid-year sale. No idea why I didn't pick it up earlier; a truly phenomenal game that I've been playing whenever possible."

CAPTION THIS!

Another screen with another witty caption. There were many commendable entries, but we decided to go old-school with this month's. Congrats go to **Matt Parker!**



"Skinner says teachers will crack any minute purple monkey dishwasher"

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The Family Guy stars the eponymous Peter Griffin and his mad-ball family; wife Lois, son Chris, daughter Meg, smart-alec dog Brian and megalomaniac baby Stewie. Season 9 sees James Woods return for his third guest appearance, and one episode has Stewie and Brian locked in a room together with no flashbacks, props or cut aways.

As you'd expect, *The Family Guy* pushes a few boundaries while still providing the laughs as an episode that Fox deemed too offensive to screen can only be seen on DVD.

Created by Seth MacFarlane, this awesome box set could be yours by subscribing today. Don't miss out!



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INCOMING



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ACTION | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** OCTOBER 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: MINDSCAPE | **DEVELOPER:** KONAMI | **PLAYERS:** 1

CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW

When a problem comes along (you must whip it)

THE PITCH

Whip-cracking vampires until they die. Exploring labyrinthine castles and powering yourself up. All in glorious 3D.

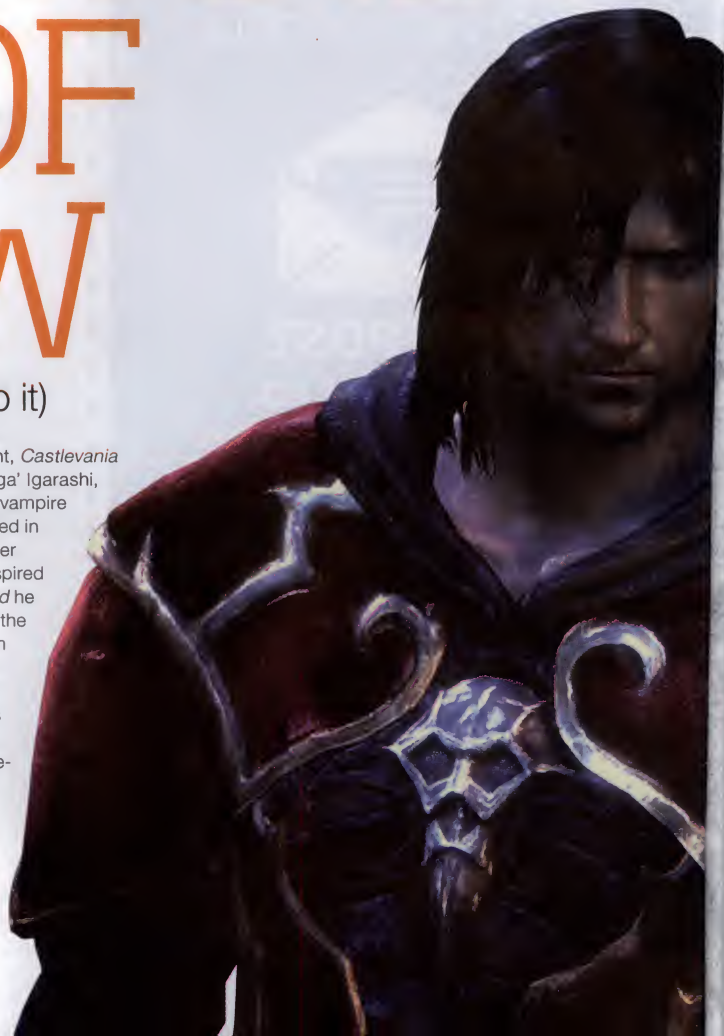


Castlevania. The phrase reads like a Pixar movie pitch, where an animated fortress has an overly-high opinion of itself, until it's brought down to earth by a moralising catapult and some wisecracking boulders (voiced by Kid Rock and Sharon Stone, no doubt).

Sounds like a movie we'd pay to see, but the word 'Castlevania' means so much more to us than that. Regular readers of *OPS* may have noticed that we harbour something of a soft spot for *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, Konami's wonderful 2D adventure on the PSX. We'll take any excuse to mention it in retro features and will happily print screenshots of it at the slightest provocation. Only Mike Haggart features more prominently.

Symphony of the Night hailed from 1997, an era when blood-suckers were still evil (not sparkly, pre-teen fantasy). This game served as a major turning point in the series because

up until that point, *Castlevania* producer, Koji 'Iga' Igarashi, had kept his 2D vampire hunts firmly rooted in linear action. After being heavily inspired by *Super Metroid* he decided to shift the series away from the stage-by-stage concept of previous titles and cultivate a totally open, free-roaming castle for the player to explore, along with the introduction of RPG elements.





40 DJ HERO 2
We travel to London to get the latest on this serious music simulator.



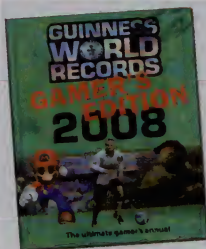
42 DIRT 3
We check this out and see if it's worth getting any excited about.



46 WRC
And now rally fans can get the WRC out, get it?



47 CARGASM
The most non-interactive mission creator for a racing game ever?



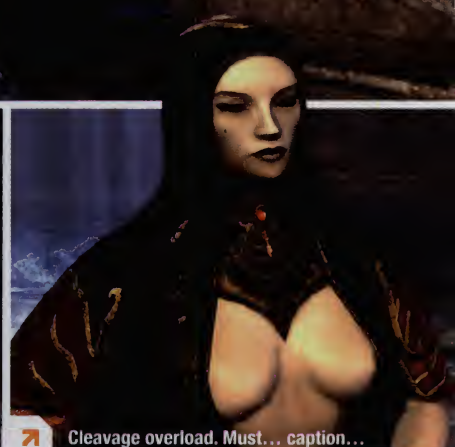
HIGH STAKES VAMPIRE SLAYING

The *Castlevania* Legacy stretches back through 20 plus games and 25 years. The success of the series has resulted in Guinness World Records awarding its creators seven world records in the *Guinness World Records: Gamer's Edition 2008*. These records include "Most Games in an Action Adventure Series" and "Largest Number of Platforms for One Series"

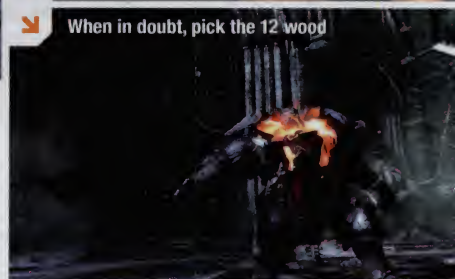
"This vampire hunter is 'Man' Helsing - and we totally respect that"



The few. The proud. The beardedly



Cleavage overload. Must... caption...



When in doubt, pick the 12 wood

Early detractors noted the structural similarities and labelled the amalgamation 'Metrovania' or 'Castleroid'. We dubbed it genius.

That bold revamping of the series was risky, but succeeded because it promoted exploration while also keeping the addictive hack 'n' slash feel that fans craved. Unfortunately, the next evolutionary leap for the series, the third dimension, never quite achieved such stratospheric results. *Castlevania 64* (1999) had a litany of camera and control issues that put a nail in its coffin, the PS2's *Castlevania: Lament of Innocent* (2006) was guilty of being a middling *Devil May Cry* clone and the follow-up, *Curse of Darkness*, had the hex of dullness and boredom placed upon it.

"*Castlevania: Lords of Shadow* is a reboot of the franchise and is not a part of the original series canon" head producer Dave Cox is quick to point out. "It's a fantasy action-adventure game being co-developed by MercurySteam [whose last project was 2007's *Clive Barker's Jericho*] and Kojima Productions. Yes,

Kojima-san is involved with the title, albeit in a smaller, overseeing role. That said, you may see a cardboard box enemy in there somewhere."

Set in the 11th Century, *Lords of Shadow* puts you in control of the whip-tacular Gabriel Belmont, a character who is voiced by Robert Carlyle (*Stargate Universe*) and a member of an evil-thwarting group known as the "Brotherhood of Light". Gabriel's wife Marie, voiced by Natasha McElhone (*Californication*), is brutally murdered by a dark beast and her soul becomes trapped in limbo. Making like Indiana Jones crossbred with Dante, Gabriel starts to search for a means to free his beloved and to whip more arse than a dominatrix on red cordial.

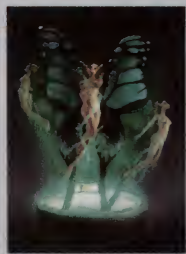
During the course of his journey he meets other characters such as Zobek (Patrick Stewart) and must ultimately defeat the three factions of the Lords of Shadow to piece together a mask that can supposedly resurrect the dead. It's interesting to note that Gabriel's character design doesn't bear the usual androgyny of his protagonist forebears. This vampire hunter is 'Man' Helsing - and we totally respect that.

Lords of Shadow features all the hallmarks that made *Symphony of the Night* amazing: cool combat, exploration, platforming and a smattering of puzzle solving. Regarding the resemblance, Cox confirms that this is one

reboot that still draws inspiration from earlier titles in the series, particularly *Castlevania* on NES and the SNES' *Super Castlevania IV*.

The combat revolves around a retractable pyro-kinetic chain-whip called 'The Combat Cross' which lets you dish out direct attacks to enemies, area attacks for crowd-control and supports secondary interactions with other items such as knives and holy water. That's right, this cat-o-nine-tails is upgradeable and can also be used for getting about Vlad's rad castle by letting you scale walls, rappel and swashbuckle across gaps.

The fight mechanics on offer are very combo based and when Cox reveals the main influence, it doesn't come as a shock. "I'm a big *Street Fighter* fan and I wanted to have the combat in the game to be full of strategic depth and an emphasis on blocking, dodging and counter-attacks. You won't be just walking about, whipping loads of skeletons and then moving onto the next room to repeat the process.



FANGS FOR THE MATURITY

The 2D *Castlevania* games always alluded to a bit of blood-letting, but were fairly neutered by the knee-jerk censors of the '90s. We always thought it was unfortunate that they never fully embraced their full violent direction. The third dimension rectifies that with gratuitous blood sprays, hacked up limbs being dragged across the floor and an overall pervasion of darkness. This game is adult and mature, Billy – make no mistake. Hell, we even saw some fairly-naked faeries in the artbook. Which was awesome.

“It's kind of a hybrid between a Japanese game and a US game”

➤ The Prince of Persyvania?



➤ The hug of maiming made the kiss of death look like a holiday



➤ Manliest Crucifix Ever

I wanted it so the player has to think and to play well. Our combat is quite deep, if you bash the buttons you're going to join those skeletons.”

Testing out the fighting onscreen, we see that different combos effect enemies more than others. Some are deadly if allowed in close but can be easily managed by ranged lashes, air-launches and merciless juggle tactics. Onscreen the action may look very similar to a great day in *God of War*, but beneath the hood it does feel much more tactical. Most of this nuance comes from a dark/light orb mechanic that determines how long you'll last in a scrap.

Play well and avoid taking hits and you'll fill up a focus bar thanks to the orbs bleeding out of your target. You can harness this accumulated power to fill up either your light magic (which hands you health and other buffs) or your dark magic (feeds into your fury and super-charges your offensive capabilities).

Grabs are also apparent, initiated with a tap of **LB** which triggers a set of converging circles that, once aligned, require a button press to unleash a hellacious attack. “It's kind of a hybrid between a Japanese game and a US game,” says Cox. “I really like fighting games with a lot of tightness and depth in them, but at the same time I want to have that spectacle in the combat. Hopefully that comes across in the speed at which the characters are moving, I wanted *Lords of Shadow* to be intuitive and responsive.”

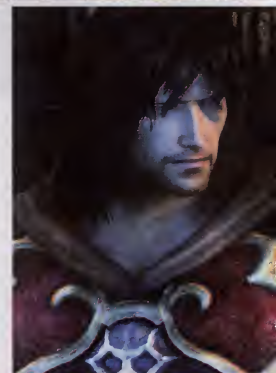
It certainly seems that way. Tapping into our aggressive side, we face vampires, werewolves,

giant spiders and goblin-like creatures and deal them death with a dervish dance of destruction.

Halfway through our demo we also size-up against another external gaming influence that has shaped *Lords of Shadow* – a large-scale, fully interactive boss reminiscent of *Shadow of the Colossus*. The 2D *Castlevania* games were characterised by epic boss encounters that were visually stunning, but this showdown is truly next-level stuff. The ice titan we go up against dwarfs us and the process of its destruction involves skilful, real-time climbing that never

once dilutes the challenge with cheesy quick-time events. When we've finally smote its ruin upon the mountainside, wiped away some sweat and basked in some minor endorphins, Cox mentions “the ice titan is the first you'll meet in the game. He's the smallest one”.

Colossal enemies, frenzied combat and twitch-kills are all well and good, but are there still some sombre times when you aren't staking vampires to the walls? Certainly. While the developers have tried to reach out to new audiences by distancing this game from



OPS AT DRACULA'S DIGS

Over the course of our many press-trip adventures we've had the opportunity to walk through the real Castle Dracula in Romania. Vlad's pad isn't as large and spooky as you might think, but homeboy did have a thing for carving secret passages (and impaling anybody who said boo about it).





"Let me guess. There is no Dana...."

Even more cleavage! Ring-a-ding-ding!



If gravity is your co-pilot, the wall is your bitch



Gabriel models armour from the War springwear collection



previous *Castlevania* titles, they have retained key elements so as not to alienate long-time fans. The in-game enemies can be defeated for experience points, which may be used to purchase combos or to augment your traversal abilities. Item collection still has a heavy presence here and larger enemies will cough up relics that will grant you further passage through the dank, crumbling strongholds.

Exploration sections will also feature prominently, and judging from the visual clout of MercurySteam's proprietary 'Mercury' engine,

snooping about the landscape will be an absolute joy. All scenes set between the fisticuffs action will encourage you to explore the beautiful environments to their fullest, as you drink in vast, expansive areas and often superb draw distances. The engine also offers the whole gamut of outdoor environmental effects, such as glorious rays of sunshine, particle fog, ice and snow storms, down-pouring thunderstorms and even day/night cycles in some parts of the game.

Cox mentions that though there's a fairly linear story throughout the world, shrewd players will find a number of multiple routes to explore. As to whether the team will faithfully recreate the intricate, infinitely back-trackable locales of *Symphony of the Night* remains to be seen.

From what we can see, 3D is working extremely well for *Lords of Shadow* thanks to a fixed-camera that broadcasts the mayhem from an intelligently-placed, high-angle perspective. Though this viewpoint works, there will always be fans who might not warm to the transition to the 3D format.

To those folks Dave Cox offers the following anecdote. "When I joined Konami in 1997 one of the first titles I worked on was *Symphony of the Night* and it was quite a massive change from what had gone before. There was a lot of doubt and worry within the company that fans wouldn't accept it – but, luckily, they did. *Castlevania* has already reinvented itself once and in many ways *Lords of Shadow* is now a very similar evolution of the franchise".

Much like physically walking into the ever-changing castle that is Dracula's home, we stepped into this preview with doubts and fears about *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow*. But after taking a look around and getting a feel for it, we find ourselves whipped into a frenzy over some next-gen wallpaper tastefully fitted around the old-school architecture.

MercurySteam's last title, *Clive Barker's Jericho*, was a solid statement of intent and the renovation they're undertaking within this *Castlevania* is being overseen by one of the most talented games designers in the world. Honestly, we love what they've done with the place and can't wait to move the rest of our stuff in. —Adam Mathew

THEY SAY

"*Castlevania: Lords of Shadow* is a visual masterpiece... [It's] a worthy return for the *Castlevania* series"

WE SAY

This is definitely moving in the right direction. If you can look past the shallow *God of War* resemblance, there's quite a deep action game beating beneath the surface.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

INCOMING



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** MUSIC | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** OCTOBER 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION | **DEVELOPER:** FREESTYLE GAMES | **PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

DJ HERO 2

A lick boom-boom down

THE PITCH

Take what was right about the original *DJ Hero* and make it even righter. Locate the superfluous facets and scratch them off the disc.



Though it was an expensive investment and an unproven concept *DJ Hero* defied the odds and was an absolute disco treat.

As you can imagine, *DJ Hero 2* follows from its prequel in simulating the performance of a disc jockey mixing one or two songs via the very same turntable controller you used the first time.

But while the song remains the same, when you scratch the surface it soon becomes obvious that developer Freestyle Games is about to put a new spin on things.

We flew over to the UK to catch up with the Freestyle team in their London studio and were

impressed to find that almost every person in the office DJs in their spare time and knows their way around a record. It was also interesting to see that Freestyle is approaching this sequel in gameplay terms we can easily understand; every music track is being note-tracked like a level in an FPS or a racing game, with a deliberate pace, logic and crescendo to it.

It's all well and good if the mash-up sounds amazing, but the crew now realise that the way it's note-tracked needs to offer challenge and make sense within the confines of their new campaign structure. Empire is the new name of

this mode, and while your progression through the original game was a bit incoherent and difficult to track, *DJ Hero 2* will offer a tiered approach that shows your metamorphosis from seedy hire-a-DJ right up to the big time.

The eventual commercial success of *DJ Hero* has clearly opened doors in the music industry and as a result this sequel has a massive setlist. The team at Freestyle now enjoy the benefit of hindsight and thanks to player feedback and the tracking of play-stats they've been able to focus the music on what the fans prefer. The new soundtrack still strongly represents the genre of hip-hop, but also mixes in more elements from electronica, pop, and dance. *DJ Hero 2* will let you remix and mash hits from over 100 of the biggest and most popular artists on the planet.

When we asked Freestyle how their music selection happens, the team told us that they initially request tracks across a large array of genres; typically stuff that they "guess" will mix well. Checking out one of their spreadsheets to get a better insight into what music was approved or denied we were shocked to see a staggering 400 tracks cleared for use and 800 or so have had their requests denied. That said, there's quite a pool of songs waiting in the wings. DLC for this sequel is going to go off.

Other improvements include a much needed tweak of the freestyle effects button. Rather than offer a repetitive, game-wide set of samples (if we hear "yeahhh, boyeee" one more time, we'll go postal), *DJ Hero 2* uses mix-specific samples lifted straight out of the mash-up you're currently playing. Also, you will now be able to mix and scratch freely between the two tracks and the game will not penalise you for small variations in fast scratching sections, providing you keep with the beat of the track.

DJ HERO 2 ARTIST LIST

- | | | | | | |
|---|--|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| • 2Pac | • Colby O'Donis | • Harold Faltermeyer | • Malcolm McLaren | • Pirate Soundsystem | • Static Major |
| • 50 Cent | • Daft Punk | • House Of Pain | • Mase | • Pitbull | • Stevie Wonder |
| • Adamski | • Damian Marley | • Iyaz | • Melle Mel & Duke Bootee | • Puff Daddy | • Talib Kweli |
| • Afrika Bambaataa & The Soul Sonic Force | • David Guetta | • Jackson 5 | • Metallica | • Pussycat Dolls | • The Chemical Brothers |
| • Armand Van Helden | • Deadmau5 | • Janet Jackson | • Missy Elliott | • Rihanna | • The Crystal Method |
| • A-Trak | • Deee-Lite | • Justice | • Mos Def | • Robin S. | • The Egg |
| • B.o.B. | • Dillinja | • Kanye West | • MSTRKRAFT | • RZA | • The Notorious B.I.G. |
| • Basement Jaxx | • Diplo | • Kaskade | • N.O.R.E. | • Salt N Pepa | • The Prodigy |
| • BlakRoc | • Dizzee Rascal | • Kelis | • Nas | • Sam Cooke | • Tiësto |
| • Bobby Womack | • DJ Shadow | • Keri Hillson | • Nate Dogg | • Sam Sparro | • Tigo |
| • Bruno Mars | • Donna Summer | • Kid Cudi | • Naughty By Nature | • Sean Paul | • Timbaland |
| • Busta Rhymes | • Dr. Dre | • Kool & The Gang | • Nelly | • Skibadee | • Tweet |
| • Calvin Harris | • Drake | • Lady Gaga | • New Boyz | • Sneaky Sound System | • Walter Murphy |
| • Chamillionaire | • Edwin Starr | • Lil Jon | • New Order | • Snow | • Warren G |
| • Chic | • Eminem | • Lil Wayne | • Newcleus | • Soulja Boy Tell Em | • Wayne Smith |
| • Chris Willis | • Estelle | • LL Cool J | • Nightcrawlers | • Sparfunk & D-Code | • Will.i.Am |
| • Clinton Sparks | • Flo Rida | • M.I.A. | • Orbital | | • Yeah Yeah Yeahs |
| | • Gorillaz | • MIARIRIS | • Pharoahe Monch | | • Young Jeezy |
| | • Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five | • Major Lazer | | | |

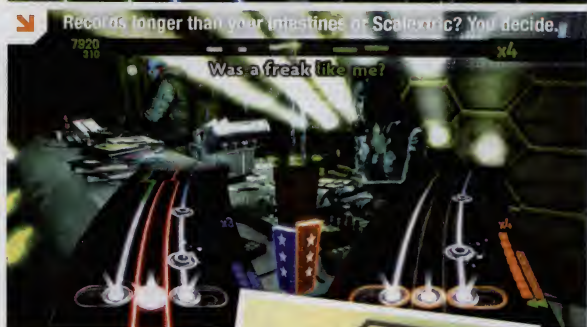
“There’s quite a pool of songs waiting in the wings. **DLC for this sequel is going to go off**”



There's a Mau5 in the house

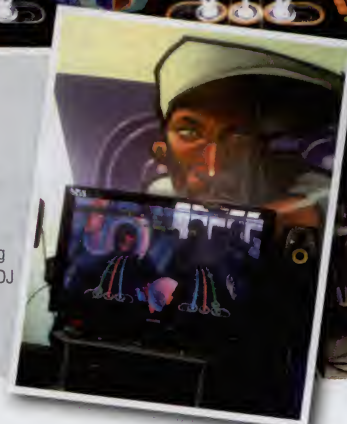


Audio cue: Partners in Kryme 'Turtle Power'. Followed by booing



FLASH DIGS

Chatting with Freestyle Games we were told that it wasn't uncommon to come to work and see Grandmaster Flash having a cuppa with Jazzy Jeff. DJ Dead Mau5 loaned them his helmet too.



The biggest change in this sequel is the support for three

players to play at the same time – two on turntables and one vocalist. Yes, the guitar peripheral support in the original is absent but we don't care. In its place, the option to sing or rap

to the lyrics is displayed just like any game of *SingStar* you've ever played.

The game grades your vocals much more on your beat and rhythm rather than pitch. It makes sense this way, because when you're singing a heavily mixed chorus shared by two different artists, you'd need a multiple personality disorder to nail the constant tone changes. Also, good luck singing the remix of Snow's 'Informer'. It's been 17 years and we still don't know what that guy's on about.

The social aspects of multiplayer seem to be a primary focus this time around. *DJ Hero 2*

“Best of luck trying to sing the mash-up remix of Snow's 'Informer'”

supports a 'Party Play' mode lifted from *Guitar Hero 5* that essentially turns the game into one big jukebox that lets people jump in and out as they please.

On top of that there are a bunch of adversarial multiplayer mode types, including Checkpoint Race (each DJ attempts to own sections of the one track) and DJ Battles (which now have a more 'call-and-response' structure). While testing these modes we instantly noticed a much cleaner UI, characters that looked much more in-synch with the music and telling “which DJ is winning” is now a cinch. Our pick of the multiplayer litter is Accumulator, where you

build a 'note' streak and 'bank it' with the Euphoria button. Biggest bank wins. Simple, yet addictive.

We walked away from *DJ Hero 2* with a renewed enthusiasm for this fledgling series. It's clear that

the winning formula still has legs and that Freestyle Games is pushing the envelope with meaningful new ideas – rather than heading off on some bizarre, 'DJ Hero: Soldiers of Spin' tangent (like some other music games).

But the most important change that sells the concept is the fact that the cost of admission has been mercifully lowered. Snapping up a *DJ Hero 2* party pack (two decks, mic and game) won't require a second mortgage. That being the case, we can't wait to spin that wheel. **Adam Mathew**

THEY SAY

“The game offers a heightened level of creative input and allows everyone to add their own touch”

WE SAY

DJ Hero and Freestyle Games have a lot in common with *Rock Band* and *Harmonix*. It's a credible music game made by people familiar with and passionate about music.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

Freestyle's main DJ was wi-wi-wicked



INCOMING

FIRST LOOK

The first *DiRT 3* footage opens with now WRC driver Ken Block tearing up a dusty Kenyan rally stage in his Monster Energy Ford Fiesta. The footage then segues into a rainy, muddy, Finnish road and then into a snow-covered Norwegian stage. Switching onto tarmac Block is temporarily joined by a Ford RS200 classic rallycross car and a Mitsubishi Evo X in rallycross spec in the hills above Monaco before launching into a Gymkhana-style performance within London's disused Battersea Power Station (complete with explosions).

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** RACING | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA 2011

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS | **DEVELOPER:** CODEMASTERS | **PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

DIRT 3

You can't stop the Block

THE PITCH

DiRT 2 with more rallying and less radical



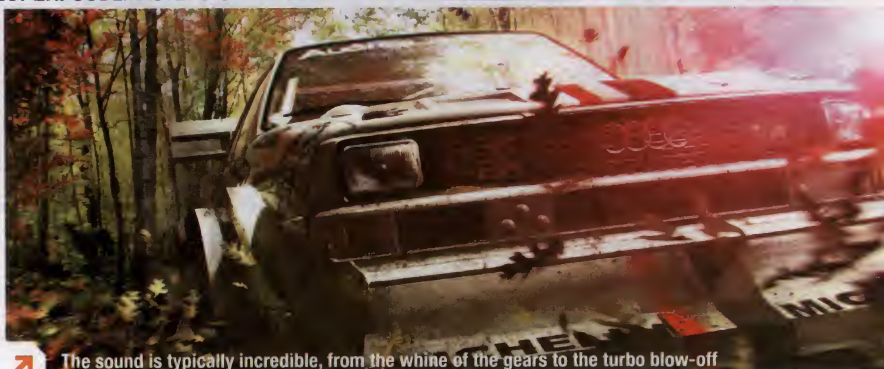
CodeMasters has announced *DiRT 3* and we're excited. We didn't love *DiRT 2* – regular readers will know this. The impressive technical aspects of *DiRT 2*, for us, were completely negated by its lack of focus and any actual rallying depth.

DiRT 3 looks set to change this.

The third instalment of the *DiRT* series doesn't ditch the US-friendly X Games atmosphere so central to *DiRT 2*, rather it just supplements it with more content that real revheads will love too. The kind of stuff we'd come to expect from the Codemasters and the *Colin McRae* series. *DiRT 3*, then, sounds like a cross between *DiRT 2* and the original *DiRT*. American spectacle mixed with European substance. This we can get behind.

DiRT 3 picks up where *DiRT 2* left off, building on the experience of being an action sports racing identity – but with more variety than the latter.

After winning the X Games at the end of *DiRT 2* you're at the top of your game. Continuing the recent Codemasters trend of immersing players into the racing world via behind-the-scenes style presentation *DiRT 3* starts you out with a business manager and a



The sound is typically incredible, from the whine of the gears to the turbo blow-off

fan base consultant. These partners will help steer you *DiRT 3* career through four years of racing, plus special one-off challenges.

These challenges include gymkhana style events, the kind that made Ken Block famous, plus emulating incredible feats like Travis Pastrana's record-setting 269-foot rally car jump. These kinds of events will provide a change of pace from the white-knuckle racing you'll be involved in most of the time.

The game features the biggest roster of cars in the series to date, including selections from 50 years of rally racing. In the screens here, for instance, you'll notice the Mini Cooper S (most famous for its success in the Monte Carlo Rally during the '60s) and the Audi Quattro S1 (the fire-breathing Group B juggernaut that temporarily dominated off-road racing during the '80s and revolutionised rallying forever). You'll also spot Ken Block's Monster Ford Fiesta, another real rally car with real rallying spunk. Iconic sleds like the Stratos and the Delta Integrale, plus Carlos Sainz's Celica, Colin McRae's classic 555 Impreza and many more, will also feature.

This makes us excited. The lack of many proper rallying cars with any shred of credibility in *DiRT 2* was a real downer for us. A Pontiac Solstice? Really? We'd rather walk.

DiRT 3 will boast more events and tracks than its predecessor. Also fantastic news, it brings back a full Rally World Tour schedule with five stages of racing at each location.

Many locations are yet to be revealed, although get ready for some snow in *DiRT* for the first time. *DiRT 3* will have a dynamic weather system which produces different weather conditions as you race, so accumulating snow will change how your car handles as you drive. There'll be twice as much track content in *DiRT 3* than *DiRT 2*. The game also features a day-to-night cycle.

The online features continue to evolve, and *DiRT 3* will allow you to can record and share videos via a YouTube upload. We're also happy to report that offline split-screen will finally make its way back to the series.

WRC's monopoly on real rallying action may be a short one. **— Luke Reilly**

THEY SAY

"*DiRT 3* will boast more cars, more locations, more routes and more events than any other game in the series"

WE SAY

Already looks and sounds far more like the game we wanted *DiRT 2*. We await more information about this game with genuine eagerness.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

This is the Self Preservation Society...



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: MUSIC | DEVELOPER: UBISOFT
PUBLISHER: UBISOFT | EXPECTED RELEASE: LATE 2010

MICHAEL JACKSON: THE EXPERIENCE

"Ah-hee-hee", "Sha-mone", "Hoo!", etc.

THE PITCH

Play as MJ, bust out slick moves and sing rad lyrics intermixed with non-words. Nnnn-dah!



You know what? We've already played a game starring Michael Jackson.

The year was 1991. The console was the Sega Mega Drive. The gameplay experience? We had to guide Mike around a city, make him dance-fight goons, grab Bubbles the monkey to power-up and, ultimately, collect... children. You couldn't make this stuff up.

As weird as it was, *Michael Jackson's Moonwalker* now stands as something of a cult hit. Though the 16-bit sound processors of the day were hideously under-equipped for any tune that wanted to rise above the term 'muzak', the game still managed to be toe-tapping, thanks to bleep-bloop versions of Bad, Smooth Criminal, Speed Demon and The Way You Make Me Feel.

In *Michael Jackson: The Experience*, Ubisoft is wisely focusing on the strength of Michael's music, rather than coming up

with a bizarre premise where Mike turns into a robotic, kid-fixated moonstalker. This time around we'll be playing a music/dance/rhythm video game that will feature many of Mike's classic hits, such as Thriller, Bad, Beat It, and Billie Jean. Details are still sketchy, but Ubisoft has confirmed that PlayStation Move support will feature and allow us to "step into the shoes of Michael Jackson himself and relive his most iconic performances through singing and dancing."

The game's release is touted to coincide with the arrival of a new album of never-before-released songs from Jackson, due this November. Given that correlation, we just hope that some tender love and care is being applied to this license to ensure it's a decent product worthy of portraying one of the greatest entertainers in history. This had better be Bad. You know it, you know.

Adam Mathew

THEY SAY

"[Everyone] will now have an opportunity to... experience Michael's music and dance in an innovative, exciting and fun way"

WE SAY

We just hope we can put aside our hatred of auto-pitch long enough to enjoy this. If the talentless don't remain so, what will we do for laughs?

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | DEVELOPER: PLATINUM GAMES
PUBLISHER: SEGA | EXPECTED RELEASE: OCTOBER 2010

VANQUISH

A classy name for death and a classy way of delivering it

If there was an award for Best Menu Shift from 'Start game' to 'Options' in a videogame, we reckon *Vanquish* would win it. Flicking your D-pad up or down makes a cylindrical cityscape wheel about in an impressive, thoroughly superfluous two second cinematic. We can think of no better introduction to a game about showing off.

Spewing forth from the forehead of Shinji Mikami (of *Resident Evil* fame) *Vanquish* tells a tale set in the near future where US cities are under threat from space commies and their microwave gun. It's up to a squad of stereotypical space marines and you – Gideon, wearer of the über ARS suit – to board Crazy Ivan's vessel before he can take aim at New York and treat it like last night's leftovers.

Jumping into the game you can instantly recognise a certain sense of flair thanks to an increase in basic movement speed, acrobatic melee takedowns and a boost mechanic that makes you knee slide like Marty McFly with a Fender. Sure, you've got access to the typical cover system and the usual assortment of bullet weapons, but the slide increases the pace of combat like never before. If twitch



Space commies. They're the worst kind

gaming isn't your bag, there's the AR Mode; a bullet time effect that has incoming shells lazily whisking past your melon. Switching between these two polar opposites of speed is what makes a firefight in *Vanquish* so mesmerising.

During our brief time spent with it we saw sparks of genius; like the mechanic that lets you blaze a cigarette behind cover and then flick it away to decoy enemies. We also noticed that the story was cheesier than the moon, thanks to a few of the voice actors operating well outside their usual toughness zone. A sketchy story sounds like an occupational hazard of Japanese game design; it's the gunplay that's well worth the price of admission. Adam Mathew

THE PITCH

Slide between cover like Errol Flynn did between sheets.



THEY SAY

"A sci-fi shooter of epic proportions with a fast, fluid and frenetic combat system, and an engaging and immersive storyline"

WE SAY

Super suit that every other soldier should have but doesn't: check. Obnoxious American space marines: double check. Astro Russians... Wait. What?

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

INCOMING

FIXED OUR GAME, WE HAVE

The *Force Unleashed II* will refine gameplay elements from the original and add more variety with such features as puzzle solving and, at one point, piloting a TIE fighter. LucasArts has acknowledged our frustration with the first game's targeting system and says that fixing the Force grip feature was top priority. Which means the act of choking will no longer choke.

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | EXPECTED RELEASE: OCTOBER 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION | DEVELOPER: LUCASARTS | PLAYERS: 1-TBC

STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED II

Not even death can keep a good (bad) guy down

THE PITCH

It's like Episode 3.75, whilst including iconic characters from a well-loved franchise. Plus, Yoda's in it.



Expansive. That's the first word that comes to mind when we hear the story behind this sequel to the fastest-selling *Star Wars* game of all time. You can't accuse Mr. Beady's universe of not being packed with action, so prepare yourself for an information overload and a massive spoiler alert. Although Starkiller was knocked off at the end of *The Force Unleashed*, having ironically helped set up the Rebel Alliance by sacrificing himself so that they could escape, he's been cloned and again back under Darth Vader's control.

It's not long before this clone starts getting crazy visions of a past he's never actually had and eventually twigs that he has to see Juno. Making a break from his prison to find her he intends to figure out just what the hell's going on. Vader, however, has other plans and sends the galaxy's best bounty

hunter, Boba Fett, to capture Juno in order to lure Starkiller back.

Boba Fett's not the only big name *Star Wars* character to make an appearance as Starkiller travels to Dagobah to meet the most hardcore Jedi master, Yoda, who will be integral to the story. Exciting stuff.

The massive story's being backed up with improved gameplay. You're now fitted out with two lightsabers for more creative carnage, as a simple swing of your 'sabers tends to 'liberate' troopers of their limbs and sometimes separate their head from their torso. There's no blood or gore, but we're happy to see a little more violence added.

LucasArts has listened to fan feedback and is promising more challenging enemies to avoid players spamming one attack. You have the usual Stormtroopers that are mere fodder, but also enemies on jetpacks that require a bit more nous to take down.

'Epic boss battles' are also a key element this time around, and we saw a monstrous Gorog tearing apart a system of platforms and catwalks that Starkiller was running across, trying to smash him with his enormous fists. The camera pulls back to take in more of the beast, and it looks like the team have taken inspiration from *God of War* in this regard. Bigger enemies also need



We feel like armoured chicken tonight

He doesn't just kill stars, you know. He kills everything



“Starkiller travels to Dagobah to meet the most **hardcore** Jedi master, Yoda”

THEY SAY

"The *Force Unleashed II* gives fans an opportunity to wreak havoc on an even greater scale in the *Star Wars* universe"

WE SAY

It has the combat down pat with dual light sabers, and it's going to at least appeal to fans' raving lust for more Yoda and Boba Fett. Plus it looks a treat.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING



The robot: it's not just a type of dance

INCOMING

lines in mini-skirmishes back on Earth. If you cut your teeth on the ancient *MechWarrior* series and also *Virtual On* you'll roughly know the gameplay formula. Your giant robot has four weapons available – one for each hand and shoulder – that are mapped to your shoulder buttons, but these metal bipeds are surprisingly nimble, being able to skate around the (remarkably flat) battlefields and also hover in the air.

Handling leans more towards arcade but there's a tactical element too, as you'll also have to balance firepower with the capabilities of your mech. Stack too much weight or power-hungry weapons on and you'll be lumbering.

Evolved's story isn't particularly original, but the voice acting's perfectly capable. The few levels we've played flow nicely as you're introduced to new mechanics, and the missions are varied. Plus, lots and lots of robot explosions. Review next issue. **Paul Taylor**

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ACTION | **DEVELOPER:** DOUBLE HELIX GAMES
PLAYERS: 1-8 | **PUBLISHER:** UBISOFT | **DUE:** OCTOBER 2010

FRONT MISSION EVOLVED

THE PITCH

The customisation of *Armored Core* and the fast-pace of *Virtual On* and made it into a linear arcade adventure.



Big giant robots

We have an odd confession to make. We love robots. We love explosions. We like seeing robots smash the hell out of other robots with explosions, but *Front Mission Evolved* is probably the first mech game that has all of these qualities that we've ever really taken notice of. This *Front Mission* ditches its tactical role-playing roots and is now

an all-out action game. The change in genres is welcome, but despite satisfying the robot/big explosion criteria have to really impress us avoid being lost in a quagmire of other perfectly competent action games.

Humanity is literally reaching for the stars. It's the future and giant robots – called Wanzers – are the tools that control the front

THEY SAY

"Featuring Hollywood style production values ... players are thrust deep into a swirl of destruction, conspiracy and crumbling alliances"

WE SAY

It's action packed, accessible and it looks pretty. Changing the franchise from being a turn based tactical RPG to something where the 'bots can blow things up at will is smart.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** RACING | **DEVELOPER:** CODEMASTERS
PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS | **DUE:** SEPTEMBER 2010

F1 2010

IT'S GO GO GO!

THE PITCH

The tenacity of Mark Webber with the style of Red Bull, delivered with Codies' finest racing nous.



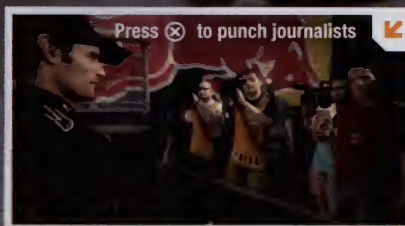
Codemasters' latest racing title highlights a very important fact: Formula 1 is a sport. It's damn gruelling, too. This is a title that's going to appeal to the both the everyman and F1 enthusiast – a smart move.

If you feel nervous about squeezing your big toe down on the accelerator of a 300+kph machine you can switch on all manner of assists to ease you in. You'll still appreciate the fine level of detail, as this is a glorious-looking title: it's glossier than the paint section at Bunnings.

Jump in on hard difficulty or above and you're going to have to know your stuff, in terms of F1 the sport and the game as the power and fragility of these cars is

fantastically realised. We screamed through the tunnel in Monte Carlo and forgot to slow down for the chicane – twice. On the first lap we were penalised for cutting the corner, and the second time we slammed on the brakes just too late and took out Sebastian Vettel. Our front wing smashed off and after ricocheting into the barrier we punctured our front right tyre leaving it fabulously deformed.

Stay out of trouble and you have to be wary of slipstreaming, as dirty air from the cars in front can overheat your engine. Yes, it's hardcore but not inaccessibly, and you'd be foolish to want it any other way. Definitely worth keeping your eye on, and we'll have a review next issue. **Paul Taylor**



Press X to punch journalists



Zinging in the rain

THEY SAY

"F1 2010 will put players into the heart of the world's most exciting sport, powered by cutting edge graphics"

WE SAY

It looks amazing, it feels just as good, and we're looking forward to spending more time with the 'live the life' career mode. Should make a few converts to the sport.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** RACING | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** OCTOBER 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: AFA | **DEVELOPER:** BLACK BEAN | **PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

WRC

Four left into jump, over *DiRT*?

THE PITCH

Take the best bits of the pre-*DiRT* Colin McRae games and give it a mild PS3 sheen. Add snow, power slide vigorously.



Colin McRae 2004. That and Sony's own *WRC: Rally Evolved* are the last rally games we remember fondly because, well, they were proper rally games. Despite their greatness it's a crime that we're using those as our reference point because they're ancient. After an extensive hands-on we're pleased to say this looks like it's going to scratch an itch we've had since *Colin McRae: Dirt* in 2007.

There will be proper championships where you race in certain country for a number of stages, and any damage you take during a stage has to be repaired within an hour back in the service area. You'll race across gravel, tarmac, mud in the dry and wet, as well as snow – the crucial ingredient of any rally game.

Blackbean has liberally picked elements from some of the best PlayStation racers (most of them pre-extreme Codemasters titles). To help you get to grips with the challenge of weaving a 300-odd bhp beast across these varied environments, a rally school will teach the basics, as well as how to nail a decent slide and read the feedback from your car. There are a few driving aids that can be turned on and off, too, but the we reckon the joy comes from turning everything off and learning to not mash the triggers or reef the thumbstick to over-correct.

The career mode starts you off as a total rookie in the lowest class, and you have to satisfy sponsor conditions and win races to earn more money and progress to the WRC. It's a traditional setup and we're totally cool with that.

It's quite a technical game but still accessible, and the damage model is comprehensive. Sound – as well as physical feedback – plays an important role in you knowing what your car's going through. Glance too many rocks or trees and you'll suffer, as parts give up and your beast turns into a pile of junk. Sometimes the change can be immediately felt or it might be that the gearbox is giving off a worrying whine. The scraping sound made by busted suspension will make you wince.

WRC still needs a bit of polish, though. Some of the driving aids are a bit too effective, numbing the handling rather than giving a helping hand. There's a dearth of options when tweaking your car's set up but the iconography is slightly confusing – a 'plus' and 'minus' sign next to the brake balance meter tells us nothing.



➤ The hover rally never really took off

AND THEN SOME

The actual WRC championship has taken a bit of a beating in the last few years. There are only two manufacturers in it, down from nearly half a dozen in years gone by. Backing it up though, in real life and in the game, are a bunch of lower-spec championships that still offer a sweet rally high. In the future, lower specced – and therefore cheaper – cars will be the main attraction. *WRC* will have four different categories – WRC, S-WRC, P-WRC, J-WRC. A handful of legendary Group B cars will be made available as DLC.

Our co-driver sounded far too choppy (his instructions coming across as stilted phrases rather than one smooth delivery) and the engine effects could be throatier.

Blackbean is still working on *WRC*. With a few tightened screws and bit of paint this could be rally good. Full review soon. 🐼 **Paul Taylor**

THEY SAY

"Official locations, official rally cars and official drivers – everything in *WRC* is the full experience of this challenging motorsport"

WE SAY

Take out the official drivers and tracks and you're still left with one of the most comprehensive rally games on your PS3. *DiRT 3* should take notes.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
 LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING





Nope. We've still got a raging soft-on here

INCOMING

THEY SAY

"Heralding a return of the classic arcade racer, *Cargasm* gives gamers a host of supercars which they can enter into different races"

WE SAY

Are you high? Granted, games like *Outrun* had you impressing girlfriends, but a harem kicks that mechanic up a notch. Graphics look okay-ish.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: RACING | DEVELOPER: CANDELLA SOFTWARE
PUBLISHER: TBA | EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA

CARGASM

The real racing *stimulator*?

THE PITCH

In America, first you get the supercar, then you get the ecstasy, then you get the women.



The last time we saw a product this steeped in innuendo was 1998. The game was *'Wargasm'* and its title only made partial sense in that it was a strategy game whose taxing nature caused our pulse to rise (but nothing else, we swear). The term 'cargasm', makes considerably less sense and we have no idea where no-name developer Candella Software is going with its forthcoming "race orgy".

According to the scant details we can piece together, *Cargasm* is an arcade racer that tasks you with impressing "ravishing

maidens" who are "constantly exhorting you to go faster" in order to earn "Ecstasy points" from them. Gather enough of these points and you'll find yourself inundated with flocks of nubile ladies awaiting you in your personal, we-can't-believe-we're-about-to-type-this, 'Cargasm Harem'.

Now, we know what you're thinking. Surely there's been some error in translation here. Well how about this; you can earn trophies that include Cargasm Rave, Thrust, Lesbos, Orgy, Gigolo, Lothario, Playboy and the most coveted of all, Cargasm Sultan. Then there's

the matter of the game manifesto to consider. "Our focus is on pure racing fun rather than simulation" Creative Director Ajith Ram proudly ejaculates. "We're expecting gamers to go oooh aahh aahhh... with gaming ecstasy." Okay, so much for that theory.

There's a lot of sexist gimmickry here that will have feminists everywhere lighting their pitchforks, but the game attempts to redeem itself with other gameplay features. *Cargasm* offers 45 supercars to unlock and upgrade, online leaderboards (where you can show off your cars/harem) and tracks based on real-world locations such as San Francisco, Yosemite National Park, London, Mount Kilimanjaro and Egypt. The website also has a big bullet point that confirms "cars with varying handling".

Says it all really. Seriously, this isn't real, is it? **Adam Mathew**

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: FIGHTING | DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PUBLISHER: THQ | EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA

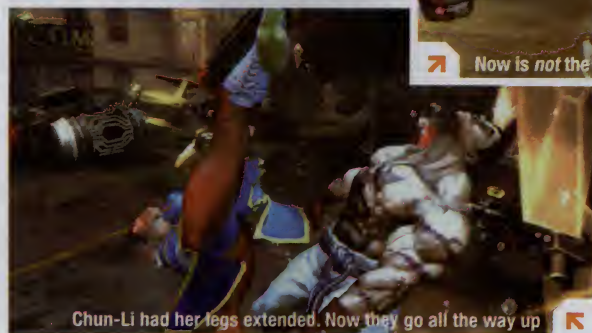
STREET FIGHTER X TEKKEN

Tekken it to the Streets

Cross-over crazed Capcom is colliding universes once more with *Street Fighter X Tekken* (pronounced Street Fighter 'Cross' Tekken). While it's very early days yet, and Capcom has previously paired up two groups of fighters that have made even less sense, we're putting all our money down on the side that can throw projectiles and uppercut with ignited fists.

As this title is being made primarily by Capcom, the gameplay will be truer to the fight mechanics of *Street Fighter IV* as opposed to *Tekken*. The demo we were shown had characters Ryu and Kazuya Mishima beating the polygonal snot out of each other and it also highlighted a tag feature where Chun-Li and Nina Williams jumped in and performed partner super combos.

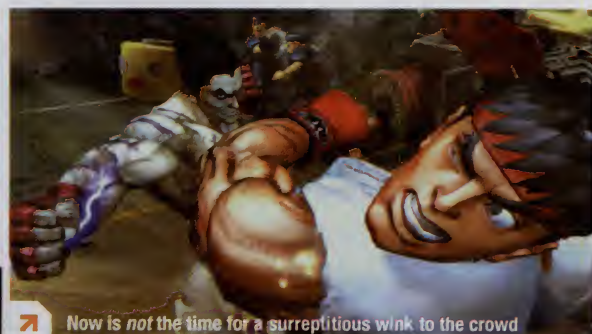
Clearly the game is very early in development and much of the gameplay adheres to the *SFIV* gameplay system; but when we analysed the recorded demo, we did notice more details on how the tonking gets done. It seems there are crouch dashes which can be sneakily cancelled into different moves, a very *Tekken* trait. Ryu can now use his Joudan kick from *Street Fighter III*,



which induces wall bounces, and he has also remembered how to use his target combo from *Third Strike*.

On the *Tekken* side of things, certain combos now seem to be translated as special moves, others are interpreted as plain old combo strings. We also recognised a few classic follow-ups being used, such as Hell Sweep to Hook and also crouch dashing to Hell Sweep. Another tactic we'll be milking the crap out of is a move we saw that was reminiscent of the rolling cross-chop get up.

But as we said before, this is all early days



Now is *not* the time for a surreptitious wink to the crowd

THE PITCH

Take the best combatants of *Tekken* and *Street Fighter*, spread rumours about each of them, make them punch on to the death. Simple.



yet. Whether the throwback moves from *Street Fighter III* and the *Tekken* idiosyncrasies stay in the final game is still probably being decided upon right now.

All will be revealed when the fighters from *Streeties* and *Tekken*, unite, fight and find out who is number one. Stay tuned for *Tekken X Street Fighter* too. **Adam Mathew**

THEY SAY

"I'll show Team *Tekken* what a real fighting game is" – Yoshinori Ono. "We maintained the fighting scene for the 10 years *Street Fighter* was missing" – Katsuhiro Harada

WE SAY

Form a schoolyard circle, people. Them's fightin' words.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

INDEPTH

FULL METAL RACKET

Why *Call of Duty: Black Ops* is the evolution of competitive multiplayer



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

WORDS: NATHAN LAWRENCE





The old Cold War vibe continues in the multiplayer

Once again, Treyarch has been given the daunting task of paradoxically modernising the *Call of Duty* series while taking a big step back from the chronology of *Modern Warfare 2*. Still high off the mind-blowing impressiveness of *World at War*, Treyarch is the right dog to take *Call of Duty*'s multiplayer to the next level.

We arrived at Treyarch HQ in sunny LA bright and early and after being patted down and sniffed by security dogs we were finally inside. *Black Ops* multiplayer, up until this point, has been treated like a national secret. Our invitation to go and see it in action was similarly steeped in secrecy – hence last month's cryptic next issue page. An away team of journalists stood around talking politely as they hoed into a much heartier breakfast than the variety our yoga-friendly hotel had served us. After what felt like an eternity John Rafacz, manager of all things *Call of Duty*, burst through the doors and asked the ultimate in rhetorical questions, "Does anyone wanna play some *Black Ops* multiplayer?"

We were ferried into a Cold War-era war room, decked out with camouflage netting, analogue clocks, various military schematics and some rather Liam Neeson-looking shots of the real-deal Fidel Castro. Thankfully, modernity had not been completely thrown to the wind as there was also a bank of consoles on the other side of the room from where we were initially guided for a quick presentation.

TEASER TRAILERS

Rafacz introduced the Treyarch folk in the room – including studio head Mark Lamia, director of online Dan Bunting and community manager Josh Olin – before rolling a trailer that Lamia introduced. "We've just unleashed this multiplayer trailer on the world which teases a whole lot of things. You're going to find out what those things are in much greater detail without having to go through it all frame by frame."

Ever mindful of the tangible lure of the consoles behind us, Treyarch didn't mince words during the presentation portion of the day. The generic marketing hyperbole was there – "pushing the boundaries of the game", "all-new stuff for the *CoD* franchise", "a unique player experience" – but it wasn't long before money was placed where mouths were. Faster than we could type, we were hit over the head with new weapons, attachments, an in-game currency system and exciting new play mode possibilities. By the end of the presentation a lot of our pre-empted questions had been answered and, instead of being encouraged to raise our hands, we were told to step over to the other side of the room and simply try out the game. It was an offer we weren't really ever going to refuse.

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

When it comes to *Call of Duty* multiplayer there's really no need to reinvent the trigger. *Modern Warfare 2* plays well. Fantastic controls, responsive gameplay and a great spread of weapons, attachments, Perks and Kill Streaks have all contributed to its continuing success and popularity. The same is understandably true of *Black Ops*, except that everything has been taken to a whole new level.

"We had three core focuses when it came to designing the multiplayer for *Black Ops*: compete, customise and create." Community manager Josh Olin provided this outline during the presentation before we experienced it first-hand.

KNIFE TO MEAT YOU

By far the unsung hero of our multiplayer experience, the ballistic knife sees you carrying dual blades Riddick-style. The right-hand blade is the ballistic knife which, as the name suggests, sports a blade that can be shot to take enemies down at range. Fired blades can be collected off dead bodies or from walls and they also glow, making them easier to spot.



Militant KISS testify: "God gave Heckler & Koch to you. Gave..."

Not pictured: anything



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

YOU'VE GOT THE LOOK

Aside from the extended customisation options that allow you to manipulate the look of your playable character, there's also a practical level that your character will project. Players will be able to tell at a glance what Perks you have activated. Donning the Scavenger Perk will give your character more ammo pouches, using Lightweight will show off much less equipment while the Flak Jacket Perk will deck your avatar out with *Hurt Locker*-esque armour. These subtle touches to a character's visual appearance may take a bit of getting used to, but they really can help in inspiring a shift in tactics at a glance to counter various player Perks.



NEW KILL STREAKS

RC-XD

A remote-controlled car that's packed to the brim with explosives. Unleashing this will make you enter a third-person view of the car and you have to manually detonate the explosives. Hitting a wall too hard will cause it to prematurely explode, while bumping into other players will knock it off course. It can also be destroyed by astute enemy players.

ARC ANGEL

This bad boy is a TV-guided rocket. It has to be airdropped in before you can use it and you get two shots, with enemies outlined as you guide the rocket to their imminent doom. There's a time limit on how long you can control the rocket for and firing it leaves your character exposed to an enemy lead overdose.

SAM TURRET

This is the perfect response to players who are fond of deploying airborne Kill Streaks. Drop this turret on the map and enjoy the extra points as it automatically tracks and takes out helicopters and planes that are stupid enough to fly within its range.

NAPALM STRIKE

Essentially this is carpet bombing with style. Deploying the Napalm Strike will douse an entire area in glorious-looking and purifying fire that melts all baddies in its path.

MORTAR TEAM

Using this Kill Streak will bring up a map whereby you can mark not one, not two but three different locations for

a precision mortar strike. This is great for decimating all portions of a single area or thinning out camping enemy ranks all over a map.

SR-71 BLACKBIRD

This is a glorified UAV/Radar Kill Streak that shows enemy positions on a map. Beyond this, the Blackbird cannot be shot down and it also depicts the facing direction of enemies on the mini-map for even greater at-a-glance information.

GUNSHIP

A player-controlled attack helicopter that's armed to the teeth. You won't have to worry about controlling the elevation of the chopper as that's taken care of automatically, but you will get to choose where to rain down destruction on unsuspecting foes.

NAUGHTS AND CROSSBOWS

The crossbow only fires explosive-tip bolts, but that's not really a problem. You'll have to lead your target if they're moving, but scoring a hit grants the soon-to-be-doomed player with a bolt-in-head icon that lets them know they're seconds away from an explosive demise. Of course, they could always run you down and take you with them.



COMPETE

What would a shooter be without staple play modes? Of course deathmatch and objective-based play modes are back and more frantic than ever, but it's the inclusion of the smaller-scale yet intensely addictive Wager Matches that sets competitive multiplayer apart from the more traditional shooter fare (more on these later).

To make it even easier for us Aussie folk to compete against one another and not suffer from the associated lag of connecting to games from around the globe, Treyarch has included localised connecting options. This means you can choose to search for Australian games, connecting to locals with much smoother connections and a whole lot less American accents. Director of online Dan Bunting had a smile on his face when he told us, "We listened to feedback from you Aussies about not having a local connection option, so we put that in there for you. We hope you like it." Pretty sure we all will, Dan.

CUSTOMISE

When we first heard about the extended customisation options in *Black Ops* we were initially dubious; it all sounded a bit too RPG-y for our trigger-finger tastes. But once we delved further into the customisation possibilities, it made a whole lot more sense. *Black Ops* uses a currency system where players are rewarded for how they play and progress through levels (more on this later too). This currency is then used to purchase better weapons, attachments, kit and a variety of personalisation options.

Everything from the types of Perks that you select, right through to the ability to personalise your character with face paint (no Spider-Man design, we already checked) and your weapons that can include a fully customisable Player Card plus clan tag are included and add a personal level of cool, along with a global warning of the type of player that your enemies should come to fear.



Real men fire heavy machine guns from the hip whilst holding the belt. Fact

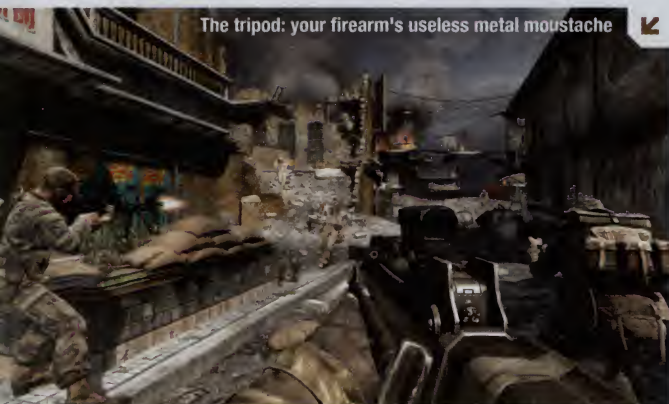


Firing the gun gangsta-style: you're doing it wrong

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS



Shotguns? You mean guns that fire shot?



The tripod: your firearm's useless metal moustache

CREATE

An all-new Theatre feature automatically records the most recent games you've been involved in for your later perusal and subsequent editing. You can watch your saved videos or search by community, friends or games you've played. Saved films can be rated and downloaded, with the coolest feature being the editing ability. Treyarch wants you to create Michael Bay-esque videos with epic shootouts, explosions and intense third-person camera shots that slowly pan around your latest victim.

The tools involved in the video editing functionality are simple to use, whereby you can control time, perspective and then cut clips and rearrange them afterwards for the ultimate in bragging rights.

"Nobody is really going to use Theatre to create and share videos of themselves getting fragged over and over again," says Bunting. "It's all about showing off the best kills that you do in the best possible way. It's all about player vanity."

Pet owners buy sweaters for their dogs. Soldiers rug up their best friend too



Inanimate office chair: secured. Good job, team. Lowering back to DEFCON 5



GET YOUR BLING ON

Perhaps the most game-changing new addition to *Black Ops* multiplayer is the inclusion of a layered currency system. Players will still follow the more recent *Call of Duty* multiplayer trend of working through various ranks, unlocking weapons, attachments and additional kit options as they progress. The big difference in *Black Ops* is that you'll be earning fistfuls of in-game credits as you do so, spending them as you see fit on the aforementioned items.

In fact, almost any item you can equip, wear, fire or augment your gaming persona with in *Black Ops* multiplayer will require you to fork out game dollars: the more powerful the augmentation, the deeper you'll have to dig. The better you play – the more kills you get, the more objectives you meet and, generally speaking, the more points you earn – the more cash you'll have access to that can then be used to further pimp your persona and arsenal.

BACK YOURSELF

In-game cash isn't simply earned by piling up a stack of enemy bodies time and time again. There are more creative ways to fill your coffers, all of which require you to put your money where your mouth is. Where the recent *Call of Duty* multiplayer tradition has been to grant players additional rank points for completing various Challenges, *Black Ops* has expanded this feature (now called Contracts) with a monetary incentive for making various accomplishments your bitch.

Contracts are separated into three categories – Assassination, Mercenary and Operations – with each category requiring a different flavour of achievements in order to access extra credits. Assassination Contracts involve basic weapon challenges (e.g. get X amount of kills with a particular weapon), Mercenary Contracts revolve around achieving milestones across various multiplayer modes (e.g. win X amount of rounds in team deathmatch), while Operations Contracts are the more skilled and classy variety that are truly challenging to players of all skill levels.

You can load up three Contracts at a time, one from each category, and while this may be frustrating to the more hardcore challenge fiends, it's not without its logic. Put simply, it's much easier to keep track of which Contracts you have activated, while simultaneously providing regular stimulation to revisit the Contracts screen. We gleaned the following information from our interview with Bunting as to why revisiting this screen might be of particular importance.

"I don't want to talk too much about DLC or future content updates, but I will say that Contracts have been designed with the possibility of new and regular [Treyarch] additions and updates in mind," he says.

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

Did we mention that you have to bet your hard-earned quiche to earn 'easy' credits with Contracts? Well, you do. But that's not so bad because you can take your time to complete the Contracts, right? Wrong. Every Contract you buy into has an in-game expiry time, which means you'll have to choose your Contracts wisely and realistically. Time limits aren't always generous either, but you will know when you've missed the boat as you'll receive a giant 'Challenge Expired' notification while playing; which isn't exactly a confidence-boosting notification.



WAGER MATCHES

The team deathmatch and objective-based multiplayer modes are fantastic and addictive in *Black Ops*. The ingenuity of the Wager Matches is what will keep *Black Ops* competitive multiplayer fresh well into the future. The best way to highlight these modes is with an observation from one of the Treyarch workers who was playing 'pit boss' and keeping all us all in line. "I'm not sure if you guys noticed, but when you were playing TDM everything was quiet and respectful with very little chatter. As soon as we switched to Wager Matches you guys started yelling and cursing."

He was right. The once-polite etiquette of unfamiliar games scribblers had turned into the usual competitive shooter fare of abuse, smack talk and the kind of impolite banter that would make a wharfie slap his mother.

Wager Matches are broken down into four varieties but all involve you fronting in-game credits before you can join the fray. The lobby sizes are smaller (six players maximum as opposed to the 24-player limit for regular play modes), but the maps are scaled accordingly, presenting cramped arenas that balance the playing field by injecting a healthy dose of luck to determine who will come out on top. Only the top three players collect winnings, which turns up the heat of these play modes even further.

COMBAT TRAINING

Are you a bit of a lame duck when it comes to competitive multiplayer? Treyarch wants to help. Combat Training allows players to experience competitive play modes offline and with/against AI-controlled players.

"We wanted *Black Ops* multiplayer modes to be accessible to everyone, not just the hardcore players," Bunting explains. "Combat Training gives new players an opportunity to gain skills and confidence offline or cooperatively with friends before jumping online."

There are a range of Combat Training-specific objectives and points to be earned, so it's not merely limited to newbies either. Supported cooperative play also offers up the opportunity for buddies to casually kick the crap out of Commie contenders, offering an accessible pick-up-and-play mode.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BALANCING

During our interview with Bunting we spent a lot of time talking about the challenges of balancing in first-person shooters.

"With *Black Ops*, we had a dedicated competitive multiplayer team, which has allowed us a lot of time and resources to focus



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

A MOUNTAIN OF MODES

ONE IN THE CHAMBER

You've got one insta-kill bullet in your gun and three lives. Every kill you get earns you another bullet, but if you miss your first shot, you're going to have to move in for the knife kill. Of course, you could earn extra bullets by sticking to your blade (one extra bullet per kill), but you have to hope that your opponent is out of bullets or has dodgy aim. The radar is switched on as soon as there are only two players left, voiding the last-minute hide-in-a-corner tactic.

STICKS AND STONES

Every player is armed with a crossbow that fires explosive-tipped bolts, ballistic knife and a ranged tomahawk. The longish reload time on the crossbow makes the ballistic knife + tomahawk combo even more attractive. If you nab a player with your tomahawk, they become bankrupted, which means it's anyone's game right down to the wire.



"Got it in black?"

DOUBLE DOWN

The gambling motif of Contracts and Wager Matches buy-ins continues with the ability to Double Down. This means that you put in twice the credits, but have the opportunity to double your winnings if you rank in the top three. Of course, further complications arise when you need at least four players to press the Double Down option, which means that, at the very least, one of you will be losing double the money for none of the reward.

SHARPSHOOTER

Every 45 seconds everyone's gun will randomly change to one of the dozens of weapon + attachment varieties in the game. Scoring Kill Streaks grants access to preset Perks (e.g. faster reload or increased movement speed) that made the job of killing all the easier.

GUN GAME

Lifted from the popular Counter-Strike modification, Gun Game rewards each kill with a different weapon. All players start out with a revolver and work their way through 20 different weapons to the ballistic knife. Complications arise when knife kills cause players to lose a gun level, the cocking pause between weapon upgrades hinders the possibility for multiple kills and switching from dual-wielded submachine guns to sniper rifles forces you to switch up your play style on the fly.

on balancing," he says. "It was important to us that the various player styles were rewarded, which meant walking that fine line with weapons, attachments, Perks and Kill Streaks."

Some *Call of Duty* fans will be glad to hear that divisive Perks such as Juggernaut (extra health) and Stopping Power (extra weapon damage) have been removed from *Black Ops*.

"These two Perks in particular seemed to be hated more than others," Bunting explains. "And, although there are folks who love them, we really wanted to stop messing with core universal constants such as health and weapon damage."

TAKING A DIVE

The crouch and prone abilities make a welcome return in *Black Ops*, but the ante has been upped with the inclusion of the ability to dive. If you're sprinting and hold down the crouch/prone button, you'll launch into a dive that can mean the difference between dead place and cover. Then, of course, there's the badass factor. You can dive over certain objects and through windows, shattering the glass in your action-movie exit/entrance. While you can't fire during the dive you can reposition your camera – allowing you to perform stylish takedowns after diving hitting the ground.

KISS TREYARCH'S ARESENAL

The great news for the contemporary weapon lovers otherwise known as *Modern Warfare 2* players is that the Cold War setting allows more advanced weaponry than Treyarch's until-now *World War II* affair.

"The single-player portion of *Black Ops* spans a large period of time, so all of those weapons will be available in multiplayer too," Bunting says. "You won't be unlocking weapons in terms of their chronology. We've worked hard on making the various weapon unlocks both logical and rewarding for higher ranks."

We thought it was pretty hard to top the awesomeness of the flamethrower from *World at War*, but Bunting countered with a smirk.

"The easy way to top the flamethrower is by making it an attachment for weapons instead of its own thing," he offers.

Yes, you read correctly, you can now be packing two simultaneous varieties of heat: a death-dealing assault rifle and an underslung flame-spewing flamethrower.

BACK IN BLACK

In June this year Activision confirmed that the *Modern Warfare 2* had sold over 20 million copies worldwide. It's being reported that pre-orders for *Black Ops* are already outpacing those of *Modern Warfare 2* last year – and that's before the Pretige Edition featuring a working RC car was announced. Baton down the hatches; this one's going to hit with force.



"Back in your hole!"

WHEN THE BOOT IS ON THE OTHER FOOT

In an *OPS* first, we've setup two genre juggernauts to go head to head in a bout of sporting chicken: **FIFA 11** against **Pro Evolution Soccer 2011**. Which is shaping up to bulge the net and bag the glory? Let us compare and contrast

On one side we have Rutter, the Lionheart, EA's top footballing general out to forever cleanse the genre from tawdry goals and arcade kitsch. On the other we find deposed king of the pitch, Shingo "Seabass" Takatsuka, who wants to finally

ditch the Famicom foundations that underpin his *Pro Evo* series and truly boot it into the current age.

Which side will take their vision and use it to bench the other? Let's look at what each is trying to achieve.

FIFA ON THE PITCH

EA's *FIFA* no longer gives a damn about *Pro Evolution*. It's a conquered mountain. Producer David Rutter, instead, is focused on improving *FIFA 11* over the last game by waging a crusade against cheap play. He wants *FIFA 11* to be more about skill and less about younger brothers exploiting design flaws. His strategy: to revitalise the defensive game.

Down to thru-ball spamming against hapless fullbacks. Down to defenders that display the casualness of a dog getting its stomach scratched.

The defenders in *FIFA 11* have been brought to life by a Frankenstein lightning strike. They're like seagulls on a wild chip, scampering to clear loose or thru balls and

stretching for intercepts. Improvements haven't been limited to the backline. Defence in general has had a reboot (sorry). *FIFA 10* players were able to effectively shield the ball using their bodies, do a sweet 180-degree jig and pass the ball safely. No more. In *FIFA 11* stocky midfielders – utilising new body physics – can shoulder check ball carriers with a few momentous strides. Simply put, keeping possession is a helluva lot tougher.

To make up for the difficulty in getting the ball close to goal, 1-on-1 shot attempts play out more lucidly. Perhaps because possession was easier, *FIFA 10*'s goalie had to be supernaturally good at saving shots. Comparatively the keeper in *FIFA 11* is more human and easier to beat. It's that realism vibe kicking in.

Trampoline soccer: we just trademarked it

“The defenders in *FIFA 11* have been brought to life... They're like seagulls on a wild chip”

— This reach-around is not what it looks or sounds like

FIFA 11 VS PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2011



Both games lack a 'win' button. There, we said it ↩



A 'take a dive' mini-game wouldn't go astray either ↩

PRO EVO ON THE PITCH

From what we've seen this is shaping up to be *Pro Evolution's* best update in several years.

Like with EA's new title, there's a passing power meter that appears on top of your player to eradicate ping-pong football and inject a royal plop of skill into proceedings. While skidding the ball to a close team mate isn't difficult, passes to team mates farther away are at risk of being over or undercooked, and there are now ample opportunities for intercepts.

Tackling has also been updated. Players can decide to hang off ball carriers before committing to either a glorious ball-bagging lunge, or a daft miss.

The other thing we enjoyed was the vastly improved player movement carried over from

last year. While old timers can still use the D-pad to move about, they'll miss out on the precise play that 360-degree passing and the new power meter can supply.

It's not all peaches and signed cleavage. Past anachronisms still abide. EA is still alone on a high twig with its snazzy ball and player physics and comparatively *Pro Evo* feels stilted, stiff. The ball still seems to be tied to the dribbler's feet, and there's no real sense of physicality when jostling. More disappointing is the AI. Even compared to last year's *FIFA 10* it lacks the desperation and intelligence to shut down simple passes and telegraphed plays. We can only hope for polishing up prior to launch.

“This is shaping up to be *Pro Evolution's* best update in several years”

APPLES WITH APPLES

So how do these differences play out? We played a bunch of Exhibition matches with both games, controlling Australia against the Kiwis and England as they took on the Portuguese.

In *FIFA 11* our time revolved around muddy possession battles in midfield that occasionally degenerated into belligerent bolognaise. Balls were lost. Passes were found short. To achieve the free flow of the last few iterations we had to concentrate. Working the ball into the box was difficult, and the defence did a stout job of pushing our carriers to the wings. It was rare we were able

to get into a shooting position and over the course of several games only twice managed to score from runs in front of goal.

Pro Evolution Soccer 2011 offered an entirely different experience. While the passing power meter offered a host of analogue approaches in attack, the game's defensive AI was under par. Using diagonal running we carved up the casual midfield, the backline the only obstacle to goal. Possession, too, was far easier with little pressure applied by the opponents. In its defence, *PES 2011* offered a punchier, crisper experience compared to the more cerebral simulation of *FIFA 11*.

FEATURE FIGHT

Traditionally EA has lauded it over Konami in the feature stakes and that trend looks to continue this year. Apart from *PES's* esteemed Master League mode there's little else to glorify. While it has licensed the UEFA Cup, it can't compete with the official teams and player data of *FIFA 11*.

Furthermore, *FIFA's* Creation Centre should be a cracking feature for player customisation. The Custom Audio feature, that allows players to upload their own chants, is also set to rocket the EA game into a higher stratosphere of personalisation.

CONCLUSION

It's early day, but the current leader, unsurprisingly, is *FIFA 11*. The only thing that can hinder EA's star is its dogged commitment to realism that has certainly ascended several levels since last year and may even turn off *FIFA 10* fans! Grinding wars in the midfield might be more like the real thing, but some players will prefer a game whose stages are set at both ends of the park. That's the goal *Pro Evolution Soccer 2011* must aim for.





PLAYSTATION MOVE

BUST A MOVE



Everything you need to know about the controller that changes *everything* – and why the next step in motion control is only possible on PS3

In a few short weeks the PlayStation Move will launch and usher in a whole new era of PlayStation gaming. If our recent reader survey is any indication, more than half of you are planning on purchasing Move within the next few months.

The PlayStation Move is Sony's next step in the motion-controlled games market, following the success of EyeToy on PS2. Utilising a new pair of controllers and the pre-existing PlayStation Eye for PS3, Move strikes a perfect balance between the camera-based motion control of the EyeToy (and Microsoft's upcoming Kinect system) and the controller-based solution Nintendo has found success with.

Move, then, is easily the most versatile new motion-controlled gaming interface.

The Nintendo Wii and its mandatory wobble controllers have made great strides in motion control. However, debuting way back in 2006 and based on a less-powerful console than the PS3, it's now technically outclassed by Move. Move is more precise and the controllers aren't attached by a flapping cord. Importantly for gamers who have hands larger than a seven-year-old girl (which, statistically, is most gamers) it fits more snugly into the hand of an average-sized gamer than the exceedingly tiny Wii controllers. The Move and its

companion sub-controller are rechargeable via the same mini-USB connection used to charge the PS3's main controller, so you won't need a constant supply of AAs.

Microsoft's Kinect, also launching this year, is an exclusively camera-controlled system. It's an ambitious solution, but a hugely problematic one. There are no controllers involved; it only uses the camera. There are no buttons, however, and proper games need buttons. There's nothing particularly elegant, for instance, about sticking your fists out in front of you and holding an imaginary steering wheel in order to play a racing game. Actual gamers will most likely find this alienating.

It's worth noting that the PlayStation Eye can also do controller-free gaming anyway (which will be best showcased in the upcoming *Kung Fu Live*). The difference is it can ALSO be combined with conventional and motion-sensitive controllers to become even better – even in regular, non-motion focussed titles. Just wait until you experience the head-tracking in *GT5*, for example.

Therefore, a combination of these two systems makes the most sense. It's fortunate, then, that Sony had already discovered a mix of controller- and camera-based motion control was the way to go. Hence Move.

Hence future!



JUST THE FACTS

Launch date:

16 September 2010 (Australia and New Zealand)

PLAYSTATION MOVE MOTION CONTROLLER

Equipped with a three-axis gyroscope, three-axis accelerometer and terrestrial magnetic field sensor the PlayStation Move motion controller tracks the precise movements and the angle of the controller while the PlayStation Eye detects the absolute position of the controller in 3D space. Highly sensitive movement tracking can be accurately recreated in the game.

KEY FEATURES:

- The advanced motion sensors in the controller precisely track both fast and subtle movements
- It includes action buttons from the DualShock 3 and/or SIXAXIS controllers for direct input
- Wireless
- Built-in rechargeable Li-ion battery
- Colour of the sphere's light changes according to background conditions
- Vibration feedback
- Simultaneously use up to four motion controllers with a PS3 system
- Charge the controller and pair it with the PS3 system via a USB cable

PLAYSTATION MOVE NAVIGATION CONTROLLER

The PlayStation Move navigation controller is a complementary controller that works in conjunction with the motion controller. It replicates the control features of the left side of a DualShock 3 and/or SIXAXIS controller. It can be used in Move games that require navigating an in-game character and adds an analogue stick, directional buttons plus two face buttons. It also adds the **△** button, **□** button and L3 button.

KEY FEATURES:

- Cordless and not attached to the motion controller at all
- Built-in rechargeable Li-ion battery
- Charge the controller and pair it with the PS3 system via a USB cable
- A DualShock 3 and/or SIXAXIS controller (held in one hand) can be used in place of the navigation controller for all games that are compatible with the navigation controller. The only difference is the navigation controller also features an **ⓧ** and **Ⓞ** button above the D-pad

PLAYSTATION EYE CAMERA

The PlayStation Eye camera can precisely track a user's movement and the motion controller's sphere to bring every move into the game. The PlayStation Eye also captures a player's voice and/or image.

KEY FEATURES:

- Designed to perform in low-light conditions. Rooms do not have to be brightly lit for the camera to deliver crisp, exposed video (60 hertz at a 640x480 pixel resolution and 120 hertz at 320x240 pixels)
- A two-setting adjustable fixed focus zoom lens can be set to a 56-degree field of view for close-up framing in chat applications or a 75-degree field of view for long shot framing in interactive physical gaming applications
- Built-in four-capsule microphone array with multi-directional voice location tracking, echo cancellation and background noise suppression. It can be used for speech recognition and chat in noisy environments without the need for a headset

WHERE TO BUY IT

JB HI-FI

Motion controller
\$67.99

Navigation controller
\$47.99

Bundle:

Motion controller +
PlayStation Eye + TBC
game \$97.99

GAME

Motion controller
\$64 (web only price)

Navigation controller
\$46 (web only price)

Bundle:

Motion controller +
PlayStation Eye
\$89 (web only price)

EB GAMES

Motion controller
\$68

Navigation controller
\$48

Bundle:

Motion controller +
PlayStation Eye \$98

MYTHBUSTERS

IT'S JUST LIKE THE WII

Wrong. It's similar, but the Wii doesn't utilise a camera to increase the capabilities of its controllers or games. So no.

IT'S EXPENSIVE

Compared to what? Kinect? Not particularly. Kinect will set you back around \$199. You can get a PlayStation Eye and two motion controllers for under \$170. Wii peripherals? The Wii Remote and the PlayStation Move motion controller have the same RRP.

THE PLAYSTATION EYE IS JUST LIKE A WII SENSOR BAR

It just sits there to track the coloured sphere on the top of the PlayStation Move motion controller, right? Wrong. The PlayStation Eye does body motion tracking and face recognition, allowing for stuff like dodging bullets in *The Shoot* by simply bending your upper body or looking around in cabin view in *Gran Turismo 5* by simply twisting your head slightly. It also does voice recognition. Who needs Kinect?

YOU NEED THE NAVIGATION CONTROLLER TO PLAY SOME GAMES

Nope. You can use a DualShock 3 or SIXAXIS if you want, for the games that require navigation.

THE PLAYSTATION MOVE CONTROLLER DOESN'T RUMBLE

Actually, it does.

YOU NEED TO BUY A BOATLOAD OF BATTERIES

No, you don't. Just like the DualShock 3 and SIXAXIS both the PlayStation Move motion and navigation controllers come with a built-in rechargeable Li-ion battery as well as a USB-mini socket for charging via the very same USB cable sold with every PS3.

THE SPHERE ON TOP OF THE PLAYSTATION MOVE MOTION CONTROLLER IS FRAGILE

Wrong again. That sphere is not made of hard plastic, but rather a squeezable, squishy material.

YOU CAN'T PLAY IN LOW LIGHT

Also wrong. The sphere at the top of the PlayStation Move motion controller lights up and is perfectly visible by the PlayStation Eye camera even in darkness. At any rate, the PlayStation Eye camera can see through darkness much better than the old EyeToy.

YOU NEED TWO MOTION CONTROLLERS TO PLAY SOME GAMES

The navigation controller is not motion sensitive so yes, for two-handed stuff you'll need two motion controllers. For now, however, this just means *The Fight: Lights Out* (which wasn't very good anyway last time we played it) and the archery and gladiator modes of *Sports Champions* (although two motion controllers in these modes are optional rather than mandatory).

THE GAMES

During our trip to this year's E3 we got an exclusive chance to sit down (stand up?) with the first batch of Move titles.

On the whole, we were pleasantly surprised with our experiences. But while our pulse was raised by some quality titles, only an eyebrow got elevated for others.



THE SHOOT

Does what it says on the tin, but in a pretty lacklustre fashion. This is an on-rails shooter that propels you through a collection of B-grade movie sets that are populated by cardboard cut-out civilians, cowboys, robots and aliens. The shooting itself is second-rate when compared to *Time Crisis* and gets downright annoying when you have to pirouette on the spot to activate bullet time. What the?



SPORTS CHAMPIONS

As we've mentioned previously, *Sports Champions* is comprised of table tennis (which allows serve slices and spin shots), volleyball, gladiator duel (use two Move controllers as a weapon and a shield), disc golf, bocce and archery. Being of a more violent persuasion, our picks of the litter are archery and gladiator duel. We reckon this will be a must-own showcase for Move.



SOCOM 4: U.S. NAVY SEALS

When it comes to shooters, there's always been the argument over which control method is better; controller vs. mouse. After playing this we imagine in a few years the argument will become Move vs. mouse. The basics are: aim at where you want to shoot, pull the trigger (which feels much like the **PS** trigger) to fire, press the 'move' button to zoom and jab forward to melee. Simple, yet elegant.



THE FIGHT: LIGHTS OUT

We played this for a bit and were not impressed at all. The idea is simple enough: you're this guy who punches other guys – in the face. The problem is the punches you deliver seem sluggish, regardless of how much actual force you're putting into your king-hits. During our demo our fighter didn't understand the concept of an uppercut either. We're hoping this was due to low battery or signal interference.



TV SUPERSTARS

The game utilises the PlayStation Eye to take a picture of you which is then used to create an avatar who is in a reality TV show. During our demo we played some party-style games such as "Frock Star" (a fashion show where you're judged on your runway strut) and "Let's Get Physical" (think: *Gladiators* meets a Japanese Game Show). Potentially hilarious with the right people involved. Lame without.



TIME CRISIS: RAZING STORM

Sold in Japan as the deliciously engrish *Big 3 Gun Shooting*, this is one *Time Crisis* game that dares to go off the rails. In addition to the original arcade mode, new gameplay modes in *Time Crisis: Razing Storm* include a sentry mode (four players take turns trying achieve a high score), plus a story mode and an eight player online battle mode that supports full FPS movement. Seemed solid to us.



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: ARAGORN'S QUEST

A bit kiddy, but felt good to play. This is shield and sword combat that makes good use of the Navigation and Move controllers together. Aragorn can unleash shield bashes (when prompted with onscreen icons), evade and unleash a selection of special sword moves, including a charged attack and sword flurries. Sorry Tolkien enthusiasts, no orc decapitations to be found here. Boo-urns.



JOHN DALY'S PROSTROKE GOLF

Lacked the visual flashiness of *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11*, but felt more educational thanks to the instant feedback we got on our swing being better presented. The game clearly explained to us that our backswing was too aggressive and our wrists were twisting. That's why our last putt (with the 3 wood) put the ball into the carpark.



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 11

This is the golf game that some critics are already hailing as an absolute 'pargasm'. Along with a 24 player online multiplayer mode for the Ryder Cup, this Move-enhanced *Tiger Woods* features succulent 1:1 golf swings. Pro tip: you'll need to place an actual golf ball on the floor as a reference point. We'll bring you our impressions next issue.



RESIDENT EVIL 5: ALTERNATIVE EDITION

While it won't win any awards for imaginative titling, *Resident Evil 5: Alternative Edition* is actually a fun way to replay one of the coolest games of last year. The point-at-the-screen shooting works great and there's also two new episodes called "Lost in Nightmares" and "Desperate Escape." Plus a bunch of new costumes and an alternate Mercenaries mode with eight new characters.



HEAVY RAIN: MOVE EDITION

Feels like a natural fit. While the content of game seems to be identical to the original, most of the inputs are now based on moving the wand to tilt, thrust, and rotate in ways that make contextual sense with what's happening on-screen. Yes, the strip scene is now extra rad. Other good news: the Move-enabled control scheme will be made available as a free patch for folks who already own this.

"WE'VE NOT HAD A SINGLE CONTROLLER DIE ON US YET"

We chat to **Mana Bar** co-founder **Guy Blomberg** about booze, button-bashers and the future of their bar





OPS: After opening just over four months ago The Mana Bar – founded by Australian Gamer co-creator Guy Blomberg (above), Zero Punctuation's Ben "Yahtzee" Crowshaw, Prasant Moorthy and Shay Leighton – is expanding to open up venues in Melbourne, Sydney and even internationally. How did you come up with the idea?

GB: Funny enough while drinking and playing video games! I used to host a lot of big parties – not gamer specific, but I'd have a projector hooked up. The idea grew from thinking that perhaps video games were now at a point where they were accessible enough to work in a more social environment.

OPS: What have been the biggest challenges in getting Mana Bar to its current state?

GB: It took two years of hard ground work in two separate industries to make the Mana Bar happen, with no other bar like it in the world to learn from. From the gaming industry the challenge was getting all the publishers and console manufacturers on board, organising the regular events, and setting up the gaming systems in such a way that they were as safe and secure as possible. From the hospitality industry the challenge was opening a very small venue with the new small bar liquor licence and all the paperwork and research that's required to get that through. All this while we had no guarantees as to whether the concept would actually work.

OPS: What do you think is the key attribute to Mana Bar's success?

GB: The people that come there – whether they be regulars or those stopping by out of interest. We get people flying interstate – and INTERNATIONALLY – just to visit the bar. That's just crazy! There's been so much good will from the community as to what we've created, and I think the overwhelming positivity keeps us going.

The other element is the invaluable combination of the four owners that I've come to really see has made all the difference in the world. Having myself (PR, events, games), Shay (hospitality, staff), Pras (business, finances, IP) and Yahtzee (MC, celebrity) all working our arses off in our respective fields for something we all love has not only made it happen, but kept it going strong.

OPS: You've been around for only four months, yet already you're expanding Mana Bar interstate and internationally. We don't know anything about business, but is this fast? It seems fast.

GB: My background isn't in hospitality, but from everyone I've talked to this is the fastest expansion for a new bar they've ever heard of. Yes, it's fast!

OPS: What kind of success do think you'll squeeze from your new locations in Melbourne and Sydney? With most game publishers based in and around Sydney playing host to even more launch events and such should be far easier with a new bar here...



GB: You're right, most of the publishers and journalists are based in Sydney – which will make it easier to organise bigger badder events for sure. Keep in mind though, even more important is the community and the people who attend the bar – we've proven we can host exclusive events and parties in Brisbane with publisher support, what we really want to make sure of is that there is lots of interest from people wanting to go.

OPS: You seem to work hard on your special events, like *Guitar Hero/Rock Band* nights, trivia parties, retro-themed evenings and other one-off launches. What's the process of picking these?

GB: I'll look at all the upcoming games and liaise with publishers about what titles would work in the Mana Bar, what prizes and competitions we can do, if we can get playable code before the game is released. Then there's just randomly created events for fun, like '80s nights, gaming trivia, tournaments, cosplay, etc. Really it's about sitting down in front of a calendar and going 'what kind of awesome, fun things can we do at the bar this week?' and just... well, doing it. It's like planning a mini-party every night. It's actually a lot of fun.

“We had no guarantees as to whether the concept would actually work”

GUY BLOMBERG

OPS: Do you have any tips on how to clean Banana Daiquiris and/or vomit out of a DualShock?

GB: Do you know in over four months of operating, we've not had a single controller die on us yet? Isn't that just nuts! We have gone through quite a few arcade sticks though – damn you *Street Fighter IV* button mashers! I can say that the durability of controllers is vastly superior than what I ever expected – though we do clean them every few hours at the bar to make sure there's no issues.

OPS: What are some of the most popular PlayStation titles amongst patrons? What's your personal favourite and why?

GB: Your four player games far the best of course, Sony titles such as *LittleBigPlanet* and *ModNation Racers* being the big winners, and of course *Modern Warfare 2*, *Tekken 6*, and *FIFA 10* get quite a lot of play time. *Resident Evil 5* co-op has been requested a lot lately, *Wipeout HD* does well too, and the *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World* game released this week has been on pretty much non-stop since it became available.

The biggest surprise for me however was *God of War III*. This is a single player game that's been out for some time now, yet whenever it's on at the bar it always draws a crowd – people do a double take when they walk past the screen, and are completely mesmerised by the epic set pieces.

OPS: How do you deal with sore losers, particularly if they're a bit sauced?

GB: We don't really have too many problems, apart from people occasionally getting a bit loud. It's the social spectator aspect to it – if you lose and there's a bunch of people standing behind watching and waiting for a turn, you just pass the controller on. Contrary to any reports out there that claim a correlation between violent video games and violent

behaviour, we've not had a single incident in the bar since we opened, impressive since we're located in what is known as the 'entertainment district' of Brisbane where that sort of behaviour is expected.

OPS: Ever thought about expanding the business to include a drive-through bottle-o where people can pick up a case and a six-pack of PlayStation Network cards?

GB: Man, don't get me started on any other crazy business ideas, it's hard enough work just operating one Mana Bar, let alone more! Besides, I want people to come inside and play the games and have a drink. The Mana Bar isn't a replacement for playing games at home, it's a complimentary addition for social people that like games.

Selling a six-pack of PlayStation Network cards over the bar though? Well now, that's going to start happening as of next week [winks].

Visit The Mana Bar at 420 Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland or at www.manabar.com.au

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PS3
PlayStation 3



XBOX 360

**XBOX
LIVE**

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“One of the most atmospheric titles available”

MAFIA II

68 MAFIA II

Crime pays

REVIEW RATINGS

PlayStation
GOLD AWARD

10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.

PlayStation
SILVER AWARD

9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with high praise.

PlayStation
BRONZE AWARD

8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments, despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. OPS has handed out this score only once: hello *Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust!*



We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible.

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- 78** Kingdom Hearts: Birth by Sleep

WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING THIS MONTH



40% Bribing police

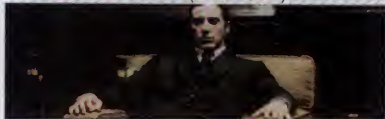
40% Requesting fly-bys

15% Causing a little trouble in big China

5% Deceiving Nazis

WORSE THAN

THE GODFATHER II (THE MOVIE)



BETTER THAN

THE GODFATHER II (THE GAME)



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ACTION | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** 2K
DEVELOPER: 2K CZECH | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **RRP:** \$109.95

MAFIA II

Guns, broads and fast cars

Vito Scaletta is about to visit his mother and sister after returning home from WWII. It's 1943 in Empire Bay, a fictional city in the United States that's a composite of New York and San Francisco. Thanks to his old friend Joe, who has connections, Vito has returned for good – and he's determined not to be as poor and worthless as his old man was. It's not long before Joe gets Vito back into his bad old ways, and tied up with the Mob. Influences and ideas from *The Godfather*, *Goodfellas* and *Scarface* abound but *Mafia II* definitely has its own identity.

Though you're in an open world, free to be a jerk to people on the street or drive your car on the wrong side of the road, this isn't

an open-world action game per se. Story and progression are deliberately linear – there are only a handful of side missions that serve to fatten your wallet either by choice or necessity, and give you a few Trophies along the way. *Mafia II* has a story to tell and it's obvious it's been finely crafted to make sure this is what you do and the way you experience it.

It's a smart move, really. Comparisons to *GTA* become moot as this and Rockstar's masterpieces can live together, being different from one another. Because the direction is so tight, more emphasis has been placed on incidental and environmental occurrences to build your appreciation and steep you more in its atmosphere.

Examples? At the start of the game you're walking towards your mother's apartment and an old lady in the neighbourhood recognises you. She makes a comment and asks about someone else's son that was also at war, and the conversation awkwardly goes on. Further down the alleyway two men are arguing with a woman who's refusing to let her husband out for a night on the town. Both beats are completely inconsequential but moments like them inject Empire Bay with increased life and character. There are more little things like this but you really have to experience them for yourself, and there are a few cheeky references to its predecessor. Don't worry too much if you haven't played 2004's *Mafia* but those who have will get a kick out of its Easter eggs.

There's a tightly woven cast of characters who are, of course, double crossing one another, lying through their teeth, and at the end you'll be unsure who Vito should trust. It's not because of bad writing or poor planning, it's just that the story is focussed on Vito and his escapades with Joe, whom you'll spend most of your time with. Both of these guys aren't anything special and unlike *The Godfather's* (the game) main



character they won't build up their crew to stratospheric levels; they just want the good life but aren't afraid to bust heads and do what they must to get it.

The story roughly spans a decade from the mid-'40s to the early '50s, making Vito's metamorphosis a believable change. In between chapters the storyline might skip a few days, a few weeks or even several years. While the direction is tight and bold, the story

meanders in places and sometimes makes you feel a little cheated out of what you think you're working towards.

At one point during the game we had the beginnings of a pretty sweet wardrobe only to have it taken away – sure, that's pretty minor but a bugbear nonetheless. As Vito says to one character, "Why do you think we do the things we do? It's to buy things; cars, suits, houses, broads." This small example

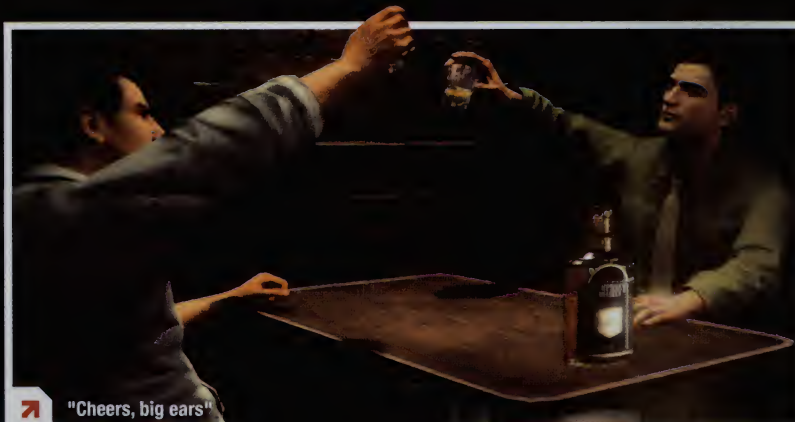
is mildly indicative of more seismic changes that stymie the premise of 'living the life'. Still, this flux throughout the game certainly keeps things interesting and it sees the pace and setting change completely. We can't go into specifics as it would wreck the story, but one particular change forces you to deal with the game's weakest component; hand to hand combat.

There are no stats to increase, and Vito is as powerful with his fists from the moment the game starts to when it wraps up. Nor do his combos or options to finish an opponent alter after this extensive practice. Why put it in there, or why not make the hand-to-hand stuff more compelling?

KNOCK IT AWWF, THE BOTHA YERS

Another element *Mafia II* got right is the way you're dealt with by the cops. Speed, and the police will chase you. Pull over and pay the fine and you're on your way. Make a break for it and the coppers might get your license plate for the car you're driving, which means a visit to the nearest chop shop to change the plates. Smartly you can set the 'cruise control' to the street's speed limit to avoid this drama.

More serious crimes, such as waving a gun around in public or shooting someone are dealt with more harshly. If you have the cash you can bribe the arresting officer with several hundred bucks, or resist the cuffs and leg it. Just make sure you're prepared with lots of health and fast car nearby if you do.



➤ "Cheers, big ears"



TRY YOUR LOCK

Roughly 30 minutes in you're given a set of lock picks that will come in extremely handy throughout the game. You're nearly always equipped with them to make breaking into any car a bit less conspicuous, and the mini-game of lifting the pins is rarely a chore (are you listening, *Alpha Protocol*?). Smashing a car window is fractionally quicker, but do it on a crowded street and nearby pedestrians will jolt and look at you. It makes you feel very uncomfortable as Vito unlatches the car door, fiddles with the ignition and takes off, but it's another brilliant touch.



Every man on the street of Empire Bay sees himself as a regular Jake LaMotta, too. While some have a glass jaw, they all know how to handle themselves as well as a capo's soldier, and we were dealt an arse-kicking a few times by a stranger on the street. It's not the only odd thing about NPCs. We wanted to take a shortcut up a flight of stairs in our car but had to slam on the anchors to avoid a lady in her Sunday best who was walking down the steps. Dropping her handbag, she planted one hand on the wall and vaulted over the side like she was getting her momentum up to streak across the MCG. Landing neatly in her heels she went back up the steps, but we reclassified the stairs as a perfect thoroughfare and accidentally on purpose sent her flying. She hit the ground, hard.

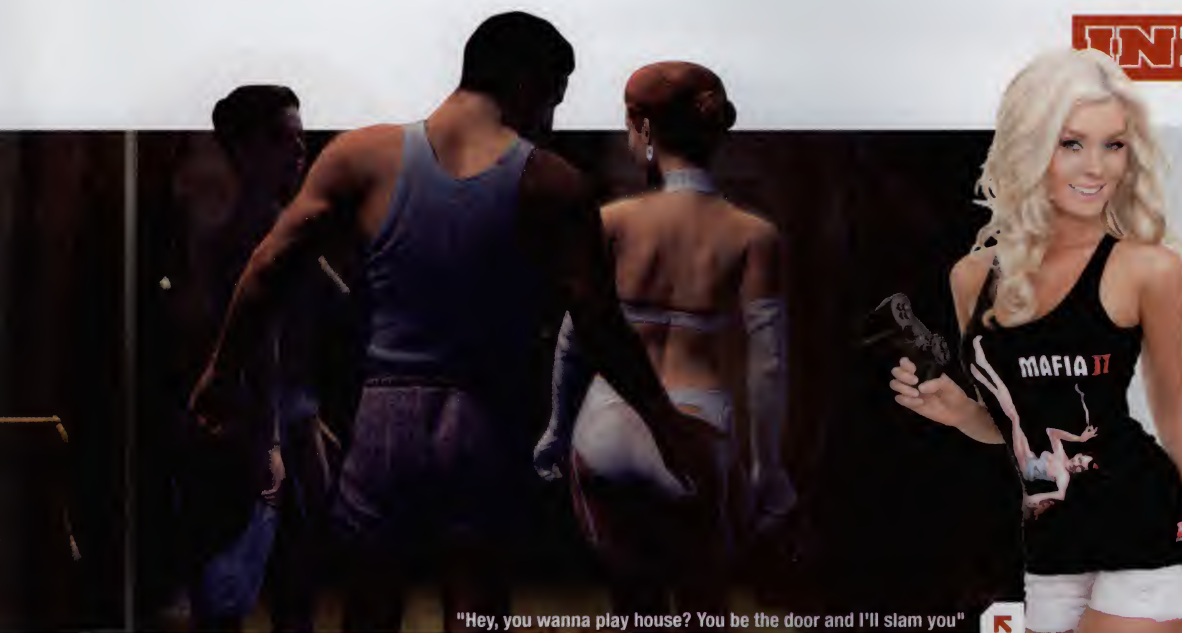
We got out of the car and hung around nearby for a few seconds. A cop showed up not long after, siren wailing. He casually strolled towards our motor with its smashed-in headlights and us loitering close by, stood over the woman's body, peered down and

then went back about his business like he'd just checked out an amusingly shaped dog turd instead of a corpse lying in plain view.

We're picking at the seams a little, but only because in nearly every other respect *Mafia II* is one of the most atmospheric titles available. It is a game whose small details and purposely-timed occurrences make it engrossing and it's obvious that 2K Czech has learnt from the past and the best in the business.

Hop into a car and while there's only three stations available they have real music befitting the era. When the decade flips the music changes too, DJs blabbing on about that wild new sound called rock n' roll or crazy inventions such as the remote control. Billboards no longer promote the war effort with colourful propaganda, and instead advertise beer and cars. The cars themselves become sleeker, faster, and handle less like a bathtub in a sea of grease. We love the way the cars perform and deform, and one of Joe's mates can improve the handling and speed of passenger vehicles (for a fee, of course).





"Hey, you wanna play house? You be the door and I'll slam you"

HIDE THE PACKAGE

Every game needs to have some sort of collectible, and *Mafia II* has some of the most, uh, titillating around. As you progress you'll find copies of *Playboy* magazines featuring authentic 1940s and '50s ladies in their naked and ample splendour. Some can be found anytime you like, others are accessible only on missions. Start the game on hard (hur hur) difficulty and you'll also unlock centrefolds. Oh, there's also several dozen 'wanted' posters hidden around the city but they're in black and white and don't feature nude women.

There's an option to change the handling between 'normal' and 'simulation', the former making your car manoeuvrable under heavy braking, and also reduces the chance of fishtailing. On simulation even the most sedate sedan becomes a deathtrap but it's so rewarding to wrestle it under control. Once you get hold of a sporty convertible you're taking your life into your own hands as a crash at high

“You're missing the point if you barrel through this trying to complete the chapters”

speed will take a chunk off your life bar or even kill you. Rocketing down a highway at 100-odd miles-per-hour is a thrill ride and then locking up the wheels sees a cloud of tyre smoke go wafting past. This game gave us some of the best drifting moments we've had in any title, as we watched Vito and his passengers rocking around in their seats. Change the perspective to the wheel view and you'll see the tyre compress when braking or going round a sharp corner, and the old brakes squealing as the suspension struggles to rebound. Magic.

Weapons, too, handle perfectly with decent recoil. While the shotgun's too powerful at mid-to-long range for its own good there's a healthy assortment of any gangster's favourite, the

Tommy gun. Hearing the clink of shell casings bouncing on the ground is up there with just pausing on the street and listening to the chatter of passers-by, mixed in with cars honking their horns and watching the world go by.

You're missing the point if you barrel through this trying to complete the chapters like a workman ticking off his list of tasks.

For better or worse, *Mafia II* sometimes feels like more of a guided experience than a game but then you'll be totally engrossed some of the most epic firefights ever seen, and the sound design is amazing. Combat

AI is intelligent too, both the guys you fight alongside and the dudes you're trying to take down, and the missions are multi-layered. A few problems such as sometimes weak voice acting, occasionally wretched screen-tearing and some slow-paced missions stop *Mafia II* from being the classic it wants to be, but overall the good far outweighs the bad. Great, but not as great as it could've been. **Paul Taylor**



➤ The period detail is brilliant



➤ "You mean, funny like a clown?"

JIMMY, DON'T BE A HERO

Exclusive to the PS3 version (for a limited time at least) is some DLC. This mode is completely different to the main game where you take part of a hitman called Jimmy, who's having a very bad day. He's not a character you'll interact with when you're playing the story, and the aim of this mini game is to cap chumps quickly and efficiently for points, kind of like SEGA's *The Club*. We like it, and it's free, so you're going to love it.



The firefights are spectacular



FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Sloppy mistakes such as characters moon walking into doors and screen tearing take the sheen off an otherwise superbly fashioned gem.

SOUND

Class leading. Make sure you have a decent set of speakers or headphones and just enjoy the ambience. Try not to cringe at the occasional voice acting clanger.

CONTROLS

Sublime car handling and great guns. Vito has just the right amount of weight, too.

REPLAY VALUE

You'll definitely have your favourite missions that you'll want to go back and play again.

VERDICT: its attention to detail, presentation and sound is to be admired, but excellence is just out of reach.

8

“For the majority of your missions you’ll get to taxi onto a runway and takeoff”

PlayStation
Official Best of Show
**BRONZE
AWARD**



➤ Barnyard destroyed, the world is safe once more



“Yankee Doodle Floppy Disk, this is Foxtrot Zulu Milkshake, request permission to land”

➤ Tone lock: not to be confused with Tone Loc (but just as rad)



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** FLIGHT | **RELEASE:** SEPTEMBER 2010 | **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT ROMANIA | **PLAYERS:** 1-16 | **RRP:** \$109.95

TOM CLANCY'S H.A.W.X. 2

Series stall or afterburner climax?

When Ubisoft Romania designed the original *H.A.W.X.* its primary objective was to fly beneath the flight-sim radar but well above the hard-deck of cheap arcade thrills. Despite some initial turbulence and rookie errors, that mission was capably executed. It was unfortunate that engaging plot, varied

missions and game length were only half-arsed secondary objectives, much like bombing an accordion factory or a mime school.

In this sequel the story has been given a noticeable overhaul, as David Crenshaw - the faceless protagonist of the original - gets unmasked and is made interesting. Also,

Ubisoft Montreal has gone for a *Call of Duty* narrative, where you're constantly switching to flyboys of other nationalities as they respond to different crises that stem from one greater global threat. The first sign of trouble kicks off in the Middle East as the *H.A.W.X.* crew (who are no longer part of a PMC) get their butts handed to them by insurgents. At the same time, deep inside Russia you must also take control of a veteran pilot who is battling evil separatists. Lastly, in Europe you're training a rookie pilot from the British Navy who eventually has to provide support to an invasion force. Like some sort of militant *Seinfeld* script, these plot tangents converge towards a single climax that ends up being much more satisfying than the original's story.

Each new chapter in the narrative isn't just a change of scenery, planes and accents. In an effort to keep the journey interesting, your missions are interspersed with cool tasks that deviate from the wall-to-wall dogfighting of the



Flying ice cold. No mistakes

last game. For example, for the majority of your missions you'll now get to taxi onto a runway and takeoff. If the mission goes too long you may need to attempt a precarious mid-air refuelling, or perhaps line up an aircraft carrier and bring 'er in gently.

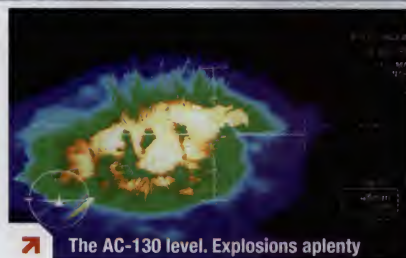
Sometimes you're not even given a flightstick; like when you're raining down metal and fire from an AC-130 in a scene similar to *Modern Warfare* (but quite a bit better). Using thermal vision you'll hose down hell from above, destroying choppers, vehicles and ships with minigun and cannon fire. The white-hot explosions are a treat to watch, and visual effects such as burning oil spills around destroyed ships don't go unnoticed.

You can even get tasked with aiding a cloak and dagger black ops team by using a UAV for sneaky surveillance, phone tapping and surgical airstrikes. They're actually fun diversions and *H.A.W.X. 2* benefits greatly from the variation and change of pace.

Have no fear tactical aviators, the bulk of the game is still turning and burning with 32 playable military aircraft (which, unfortunately, is a bit lighter than the original's 50 odd). The process of lighting up bogies feels much as it once did, but there have been some noticeable tweaks and additions to the formula. The most surprising switch-up is that the ERS, or 'Enhanced Reality System', of the first game has been stripped right back. You can still double tap to get the 'Assistance Off' external view (for missile evasion), but the 'fly through our whizz-bang HUD gates for firing solutions' mechanic is only used to line up landings. For the record; we didn't miss it.

In place of ERS are new precision weapons, which allow you to unleash pinpoint, first-person missile death from long ranges. You also have precision bombs, deployable UAV drones that offer you brief windows of manually controlled bombing and a bunch of other cool tech, like jamming pods and thermal vision modes. As we said before, the fundamentals of dogfighting feel as satisfying as the mid-air ballets of the original, but now you always have some new trick put up your sleeve that keeps boredom at bay.

Unfortunately, while they were streamlining the formula, they've also introduced some



The AC-130 level. Explosions aplenty

minor bugs that are worthy of a bit of flak. You can now only switch from third-person to first-person and cockpit view by pausing the game and wading into the options menu. It now takes roughly twice as long to flick between your armaments on the D-pad. There are some instances where unskippable cutscenes happen in real-time (e.g. shoot a power plant, watch the cutscene where the city loses power, cut back to see you've careened into the exp-power plant).

Unlocking stuff is now much harder to do thanks to steeper XP requirements and a myriad of PEC (Persistent Elite Creation) challenges to undertake. For every five 'explode x amount of enemies with weapon y' challenges there is one rad one, like 'recover from a stall at 10 metres or lower from the ground'. The items you earn by meeting these challenges can be additional plane unlocks, support packs for multiplayer and other passive buffs.

The problem is you have to unlock these in a step-by-step fashion, which means even if you don't give a crap about multiplayer you have to blow your wad of hard earned tokens on six multiplayer-only power-ups before you can get your mitts on that F-22 Raptor.

When everything is laid out in the debriefing, it's clear that *H.A.W.X. 2* has made worthy improvements on an already solid concept. True, the adversarial multiplayer still won't ignite many people's afterburners, but almost everything else about the game has been tweaked as per player feedback.

If you enjoyed the first title, you should definitely engage. If you were on the fence, we think there's enough new stuff here to make you bank over. *H.A.W.X. 2* still isn't quite 'the best of the best' material, but if you strap in, there are Gs to feel. **A Adam Mathew**

WORSE THAN

IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY



BETTER THAN

TOM CLANCY'S H.A.W.X.



Swing back and buzz the tower. You know you want to



HQ says we'll be hitting the enemy toast. Feels like a typo

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

The ground detail is much better, debris shears off planes but the lip synch is pretty rookie.

SOUND

Very decent multi-national voice acting. Features the lovely crump of explosions intermixed with a main theme reminiscent of *Terminator 2*. Crank it.

CONTROLS

Much as it once was, but there are some minor control issues that need to be patched away.

REPLAY VALUE

Lasts a lot longer than the original. Partly because there are new survival modes and arcade missions, but also because they're stingier with the unlocks.

THE BEST OF THE BEST

You can eventually unlock an F-22 Raptor; US\$150 million dollars worth of stealth, speed, agility, precision and situational awareness, combined with air-to-air and air-to-ground combat capabilities. Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, Chief of the Australian Defence Force, called it "the most outstanding fighter plane ever built."

VERDICT: A worthy successor. Ditches the high-tech training wheels, focuses on the best things you can do whilst airborne.

8



Chinese takeout with a whole new meaning

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ACTION | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS | **DEVELOPER:** IO INTERACTIVE | **PLAYERS:** 1-8 | **RRP:** \$109.95

KANE & LYNCH 2: DOG DAYS

Off the leash action for the YouTube generation

The follow-up to 2007's passable yet ultimately disappointing *Kane & Lynch: Dead Men* is a better game than its forbear. *Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days* has style and, importantly, improved controls.

When *Dead Men* was released comparisons to films like *Heat* and *Collateral* were immediate and justified. What *Dead Men* didn't do, however, was capture Mann's hard-on for gritty, digital video. *Dog Days* does.

Dog Days looks like the kind of movie Michael Mann would make if you gave him a camera phone and \$1000 bucks in change. It's immediate and in-your-face. The grainy, handheld vibe is consistent through cutscenes and gameplay, making the game feel like a cross between on-the-spot news footage and a documentary. Levels don't load, they 'buffer' – like a web-based video.

The presentation is bold – and it has its disadvantages – but we do like it. It's all post-processed trickery of course – like *WET*'s grindhouse vibe, complete with artificial film artefacts – but it's just so different. It gives what would otherwise be a dead average looking shooter a real eye-catching facelift. Harsh light streaks across the lens, intense violence is covered by crude pixilation (which is persistent and remains on corpses) and the camera's constantly in motion (although you can activate a steadycam mode). The cameraman is basically a silent third character who gets killed whenever Lynch is killed. The camera itself is even a discreet object of its own, at one point rolling down a ramp after we were killed and it was dropped.

There are drawbacks to this guerrilla-style visual approach. The uneven focus and blurring played havoc with our eyes. The camera also gets a too close to Lynch sometimes, making him take up too much on-screen real estate.

The audio is impressive, particularly the ambient effects. Voice acting is serviceable but is let down by less-than-perfect lip synching.

The controls are more robust than *Dead Men*, although the overweight Lynch only ever feels like he's moving 90 per cent as fast as he could. The user-controlled cover system is basic and flaky but it mostly works. It's also crucial if you want to live. You can take human shields, but we found everyone still shot at us anyway. The AI scrapes by but isn't great (enemies and allies still dart around a too erratically). Bullet hit detection has improved enormously but IO ruin that with Lynch's woefully poor accuracy.

The other main problems with *Dog Days* (besides the limitations of its ambitious visual style) are its length, its threadbare story and its realism identity crisis. *Dog Days* is a decent game by a talented developer, but it's still weighed down by these flaws.

You'll knock out the story mode in just four hours; it's offensively short. If you're not planning on delving into the several multiplayer modes, co-op and bonus "arcade missions" (which is simply the original's Fragile Alliance mode for people without friends) you're really not going to get your coin's worth. That stuff is here to bolster an otherwise brief main narrative.

The tale isn't much chop anyway. If you got the "non-canon" ending in *Dead Men* where Kane leaves Lynch to die at the end (like we did) you'll start the game *massively* confused. The bad news is this never really wears off. The story is a mash of shootouts and thoroughly unlikeable people that never really hooked us.

The identity crisis becomes clear when, despite the game's dedication to gritty realism it can't help but revert to tired videogame tropes like tossing exploding fuel cans, or enemies that brush off bullets like stray cake crumbs. We hate

WORSE THAN

GETTING A HITMAN SEQUEL INSTEAD



BETTER THAN

KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN



seeing an enemy (who, by the way, is probably wearing a cut-off T-shirt for some unknown reason) get stitched across the chest with SMG fire, go down on his arse only to leap up and start jogging about again. It's jarring.

You can't order your teammate around this time, but you should be playing co-op anyway. The AI Kane is about as helpful as tits on a bull most of the time. Co-op, offline and online, is the best way to play *Dog Days* by far.

A worthwhile sequel, but one that still lags behind the competition in a few too many essential areas. **➤ Luke Reilly**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Brilliant. The ugly, gritty and supremely visceral camera style suits the tone perfectly. You'll be sold from the menu screen.

SOUND

A rich tapestry of cursing and authentic background effects.

CONTROLS

Sluggish (you may want to amp up the look sensitivity). They work, but could've been more fluid.

REPLAY VALUE

Far, far too short, but if the multiplayer takes off it'll last as long as the audience does.

VERDICT: The gritty, visual style makes an otherwise average shooter stand out from the crowd.

7

FINE CHINA

At the time of print *Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days* is yet to be released, so we'll bring you our impressions of the multiplayer modes next issue. We did try the arcade mode, however. Arcade mode is a series of bespoke missions based around certain objectives. You're scored on how well you perform in these tasks and your best score will be uploaded to the online leaderboards. They're fun, but they can get a little samey.

R.U.S.E.

You shall fight them on the beaches

INFO

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: RTS
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: EUGEN SYSTEMS
PLAYERS: 1-4
RRP: \$109.95

After several missed release dates *R.U.S.E.* has finally materialised. *R.U.S.E.* mixes classic RTS action with clever trickery to create a deceitful real-time version of chess for the 21st Century. There's a scissors, paper, rock heart beating beneath *R.U.S.E.*'s exterior and it'll take some time to figure out. Across the game's six factions you'll find a number of strengths and weakness in each one's arsenal. For instance, British armour will be

massacred by German armour, but British air power is the best in the game. If you're getting chewed up on the ground try taking the battle to the skies.

It's complicated, but figuring out the most efficient way to crush your opponent is only half the battle. Utilising the game's titular ruses is absolutely essential. The straightforward ones are simple yet effective. Activating 'Terror' in a particular sector makes it more likely for enemy troops to be routed by your own forces. 'Blitz' speeds up your units for swift attacks. Spamming these kinds of ruses may prove tempting for some, but more canny players will completely bamboozle their opponents with next-level subterfuge. Consistently camouflage your air power,

for instance, and you may be able to deceive your opponent into neglecting to concentrate on their anti-air defences. On the other hand, some clever use of dummies may lead your enemy to focus entirely on their anti-air, leaving them wide open for a ground offensive they never saw coming.

It's this kind of depth that makes *R.U.S.E.* rewarding and addictive. Its slow pace offers scope for planning complex tactics well in advance. Cunning players will tear the impatient apart here. *R.U.S.E.* is about observation and forward thinking.

As an RTS game *R.U.S.E.* succeeds. It's tough and it's tight. As an RTS game, however, it's destined to only be embraced by a small, hardcore community. **A Luke Reilly**



We thought tabletop warfare was fighting over the last bit of bread at dinner

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Nice landscapes, neat zoom effects.

SOUND

Nothing standout but no real complaints.

CONTROLS

Works on the pad with no fuss, plus Move control.

REPLAY VALUE

Unexciting solo, but multi will grab the enthusiastic.

VERDICT

Massively niche, but nonetheless it's a well-crafted strategy game to sink hours into.

8

SHANK

Stabbity, stabbity, stab, stab

Shank is one of those games that sums itself up in its own title. It's also a game wears its influences proudly on its arm like a 'mum' tattoo. You're looking at a 2D brawler that nods at classic beat 'em ups and pretty much every arcade game released in the late '80s. Aesthetically it's a beautifully animated homage to the greatest graphic novels and golden-age comics.

The little umbrella that tops this cocktail off; you're a one-liner-dropping protagonist embroiled in a plot that is a love letter to all action movies. The titular Shank is out for revenge, scything his way through his old gang after they ravished and killed his missus. They made it personal. The streets will run red with pixels.

Busting chops in this game feels great. You have three main attack buttons; shank (as in stabbing), shoot (dual pistols, shotgun, uzi) and heavy attack (chainsaw, dual machetes, chained fists and katana). The idea is to stay mobile with jumps and dodges, to transition between weapons on the D-pad and to chain together combos. You'd be surprised at how much tactical depth can be milked out of only two dimensions.

You'd also double-take at the amount of blood this game leaks. Shank routinely decapitates bosses with his chainsaw and if you grapple an enemy you can punch a grenade down their oesophageus. It's also not



"My shirt! Have you seen it?"



Open wide

uncommon to find yourself up against giant S&M gimps or shanking stripper skanks.

As 'edgy' as *Shank* may sound, it is disappointingly obtuse in other areas; platforming is riddled with cheap death thanks to a lack of tightness, you can't shoot directly upwards for some reason and all the combat depth in the world isn't worth it if we can just spam one or two tactics, forever. Despite those minor misgivings, *Shank* is still a cut above the rest. **A Adam Mathew**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Absolutely beautiful 2D visuals.

SOUND

Offers a symphony of destruction.

CONTROLS

Not as razor sharp as they should be.

REPLAY VALUE

Decent. Has a great two-player co-op mode.

VERDICT

Doesn't reinvent the beat 'em up – just makes it deeper and sexier. Worth a stab.

8

INFO

FORMAT: PSN
GENRE: BEAT 'EM UP
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: KLEI
ENTERTAINMENT
PLAYERS: 1-2
RRP: \$19.95



Flipping the bird



INFO

FORMAT: PSN | **GENRE:** ACTION | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT | **PLAYERS:** 1-4 | **RRP:** \$15.95

SCOTT PILGRIM VS THE WORLD

Four players. Seven evil exes. One 8-bit hero

Now this is what we call full circle. *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World* (the comic) is heavily influenced by and bases a lot of its humour on videogames, and *Scott Pilgrim* (the game) is heavily influenced by and bases its humour on the comic. If you're not familiar with the comics or haven't seen the movie, this side-scrolling beat-'em-up takes cues from both the gameplay and graphics of 8- and 16-bit games and makes it pretty.

Scott Pilgrim (the character) has fallen in love with a girl called Ramona Flowers and must battle her seven evil exes to win her heart; fans of the source material will enjoy this the most and appreciate the in-jokes. Cute nods

to characters and events from the comic are littered throughout but the game's still cohesive and gives just enough of a story when the bosses (Ramona's exes) appear to not totally alienate newcomers.

While most gamers will blithely accept the fact defeated enemies drop coins you're only going to fully 'get' it if you're a child of the '80s, weaned on a diet of *Double Dragon*, or had a NES controller almost glued to your hands and understand the limitations of 8-bit technology. Bonus stages, for example, have weird graphic glitches at the beginning and end, like a C64 game that hasn't loaded properly. There are tonnes of cheeky references to games of all kinds; most of them found in the shops that you enter to buy food and items to replenish your health and other vitals.

Scott Pilgrim plays on people's memories of old-school games and the era; it's presented in a deliberately jaggy sprite form, the music sounds like it came from Game Gear title with about four tracks of synth, and the animation is missing a few frames as your characters leap, punch and kick their way through the swarms of enemies. That's kinda the point and not a criticism, though, and it's extremely well produced. It's the gaming equivalent of giving Daft Punk a set of shitty Casio keyboards to recreate a Led Zeppelin album; you know the end result will at least be a gimmick and



it may even sound utterly amazing. Chiptune gurus Anamanaguchi have written a bespoke soundtrack for the game and the energy it exudes is infectious.

You can forgive *Scott Pilgrim* for liberally stealing mechanics from sidescrollers of the past because, again, that's what it's about. But it also incorporates an RPG element. Defeating enemies earns XP to level up your repertoire of moves, like simple combos, jumping attacks etc. While you'll spend most of your time whaling on the melee attacks there's a few special moves that take a chunk out of your 'gut' points, which also convert to hit points if you die. One of the most unique attacks can only be utilised by playing in co-op where you and your friends bust out their instruments and use the power of rock to demolish a crowd of goons – it looks really cool. You can't spam this too much as the only way to fill up your



Pure massacre

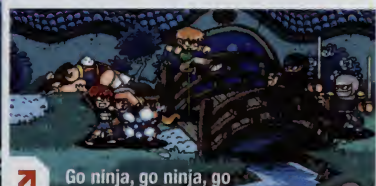
WORSE THAN

FINAL FIGHT



BETTER THAN

RAG DOLL KUNG FU



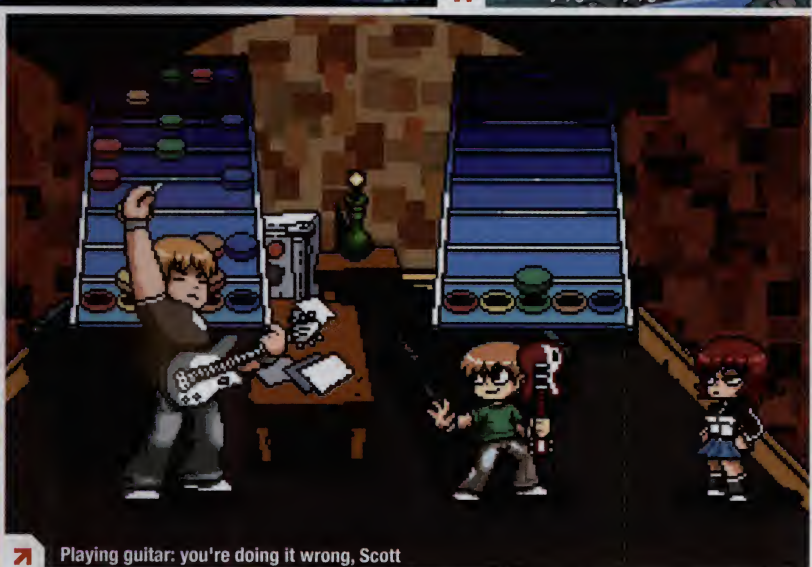
Go ninja, go ninja, go



Our love of the 8-bit drew looks like this from girls...



...but we don't recall this happening. Ever



Playing guitar: you're doing it wrong, Scott

BRAINS!

Scott Pilgrim doesn't just ape games of yesteryear – it takes fads from the last few years too. We're talking about killing zombies even when they have nothing to do with the storyline or feature as the main gimmick. Other games that erroneously include them are *World at War*, the ingenious *Plants Vs Zombies* (hurry up and make it the PSN, please) and several other undead games on other consoles.

gut points is by leveling up, or buying food and items from a shop.

Scott and the other players also have extra attributes that need to be considered, such as their strength and defensive capabilities. Again, eating food or buying items from shops is the way to improve these stats, and there are only so many enemies per level or opportunities to visit a sushi joint or takeaway stand. However you can replay levels to mine it for cash and XP, and whether you see this as being part of the charm or an imbalance in difficulty depends on how forgiving you are.

Our biggest gripe is it's just too cheap and mean, leaving you very alone and swamped in single player against the hordes of enemies and overpowered bosses. Foes come thick and fast and players who charge at the edge of the screen whilst it's scrolling will get a sudden foot to the face for their eagerness.

This problem's mostly a cause for cursing in co-op when your buddy loiters in the middle ground and could've been fixed if there was more of a gap between your character and the right hand side of the screen when dashing ahead. Online co-op isn't supported, and nor is there a 'drop-in, drop-out' option. That's a massive oversight when you consider the flexibility offered by *Final Fight* and even the *LEGO* titles, and this really is a game that demands co-op. If you lose all your health in single player you'd better hope you have a food item handy, or be near a shop to refuel yourself. In co-op a friend can revive you at the cost of your coins or you can float around as a ghost and steal one of their spare lives. It's rare for us to say this, but do yourself and your friends a favour and play this on the easiest setting.

Visually it gets very busy; the bright colours and presentation is joyful but we lost ourselves a few times in a maelstrom of attacking hipsters and emos due to Scott and co. being the same height and dimensions of most bad guys. These shortcomings take a fair bit of sheen off an otherwise satisfying arcade-style brawler, but gets kudos for the RPG element of levelling up and earning greater moves. A flawed gem. **Paul Taylor**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

If you get the joke you'll love it, if you don't you'll still be absorbed in the relatively fast-paced action.

SOUND

Chiptune aficionados will crank it up and probably scour the net looking for the mp3 soundtrack. Gets a bit too bleepy at times.

CONTROLS

Classic arcade fare with two attack buttons, jump, block and a couple of special moves as well.

REPLAY VALUE

Scott has a massive video shop fee that can only be paid off by beating up lots and lots of people. Better with a friend or three.

VERDICT: Best in co-op, this is fairly punishing even easy, but the limitations it imposes upon itself work in its favour.

7

ACE COMBAT JOINT ASSAULT

Not the latest War On Drugs

Ever played an *Ace Combat* game? The formula's only been tweaked slightly over the last few years, and you're guaranteed that it'll feel great, look fine and have abominable voice acting and music. You know from the start what you're getting, and it's translated pretty well to the system despite missing a second set of triggers.

Its main point of difference is that it takes place in the real world rather than the usual altered reality. There's a plot involving a mega weapon and a maniac wanting to take over the world, and it's mostly a case of you versus everyone else. Smartly you can rope in up to three of your mates via ad hoc or infrastructure mode to lessen the burden, or ditch the campaign and go for eight-player dogfights.

Apart from that you'll do the same things you've done in the past: low altitude bombing runs, escort missions and so on in order to earn money so you can buy planes and fancy weapons. So much is familiar and it's definitely a case of 'been there done that'. Many sorties become a shooting gallery as you swoop on ground targets before rocketing back up to the skies again.

Yes, the mantra is 'thrills' no matter how preposterous it is that your radar didn't notice a swarm of helicopters that have seemingly materialised out of nowhere – in the freaking



Planes > boats < seaplanes

Cool planes wear their wings backwards



Rookie tip: that orange stuff is fire

desert – with their rockets pointed straight at your position.

Ultimately, we just can't help ourselves. Place a tub of buttery, salty popcorn in front of us and we'll stuff ourselves, picking at the nutritionally deficient kernels until only the most indigestible morsels are left. Give us an *Ace Combat* and it's the same deal. **Paul Taylor**

INFO

FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: FLIGHT
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
DEVELOPER: NAMCO
PLAYERS: 1-8
RRP: \$49.95

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

A few flat textures versus a slick framerate.

SOUND

Could take the title for Cheesiest Voice Acting Ever.

CONTROLS

Yes, we could've done with more triggers.

REPLAY VALUE

Getting that top rank is damned addictive.

VERDICT

A good game but the formula needs something to keep it fresh and interesting.

7

KINGDOM HEARTS: BIRTH BY SLEEP

More than a Mickey Mouse operation

INFO

FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: JRPG
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$69.95

The *Kingdom Hearts* concept is one of the oddest around, thrusting Disney characters into a Square Enix RPG outfit. Fans of the PS2 originals are hardcore, though, and we can say their anticipation for this prequel will be high. At the risk of making the words below useless, fans should get this if you haven't already.

Newbies, keep reading. This prequel to the saga is all about friendship, forging strong emotional connections and defeating the

powers of darkness – you couldn't describe *Kingdom Hearts* as being anything but joyful.

These themes are prevalent in the story and the game mechanics. Combat is a relatively straightforward two-button affair, but there's a raft of special attacks; **X** deals the bulk of damage, while **A** lands a special attack from a rotating list. These special attacks need time to recharge, but you can cycle between them and could even just use them exclusively if you really wanted to. Then

there's the D-Link ability to 'borrow' your fellow character's abilities for a short period of time; it's all part of a stunning amount of customisation that offers depth.

The graphics are as strong as the combat. While everything's very simple it all runs smoothly and everything's nicely animated. Cutscenes tend to drag, though, and some of the voice acting will have you cringing, but we're truly impressed by the size of the game and the direction. **Paul Taylor**



Don't go to sleep unless you want to get re-birtherd. No, wait. That's gross

PlayStation
BRONZE
AWARD

Long ago, Maleficent cursed her.
Now she's stolen her heart.

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Bright and bold and very friendly. Borderline kiddie.

SOUND

The Disney voices are generally well delivered

CONTROLS

It's an action game disguised as an RPG.

REPLAY VALUE

Plenty. The three character's stories run concurrently.

VERDICT

The fighting system is amazing, but really relies on you liking traditional Disney characters.

8

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ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS

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MAFIA II DEMO



Jump into the fantastic, fictional Empire Bay during the 1950s and get to grips with the smart car handling and gunplay.

TEKKEN 2 - PSONE CLASSIC



A real PSone classic, this is one of our favourite *Tekkens*. It's aged remarkably well and it's dirt-cheap too.

SCOTT PILGRIM VS THE WORLD DEMO



This actually downloads the whole game but you get access to the first level in this retro sidescroller.

LBP - MARVEL COSTUME PACK 3



Wolverine (hurrah!) along with Capt. America, Venom, Rogue and Invisible Woman can now be downloaded for LBP

RAYMAN 2 - PSONE CLASSIC



This and *Crash Bandicoot 3* are amongst the best platforming games on PSone. Truly amazing stuff and it's yours for under \$10

NEWS

PSN DEVELOPMENTS

What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

Gearbox isn't done supporting and adding content to its excellent shooter-cum-RPG, *Borderlands*, as they've announced their fourth lot of DLC called *Claptrap's New Robot Revolution*. We loved *Borderlands* for its innovation yet successfully melding two genres together, and it was laugh out loud funny too due to the script and co-op possibilities. This DLC sounds like it's got its feet in both narrative driven skirmishes, as well as a *Mad Moxi*-style waves of enemies. There'll be 20 new missions to blast through, either solo or with a mate or three, and we highly recommend you finish *Borderlands'* single-player campaign to understand the significance of this rebellion.

You'll be able to boost your skill points by 10 to make 71 skill tree points, and also cram more weapons into your stash with three more backpack slots. Christoph Hartmann, president of 2K, said "In addition to serving as the perfect bookend to the original game, what gamer doesn't love a kung-fu-wielding Ninja Assassin Claptrap with nunchuck skills?"

As well as making *2nd Lap* for *PixelJunk Racers*, the Q-Games crew are also hard at work on *PixelJunk Shooter 2*. It's staying true to the original, whereby you have to manage your craft's heat levels whilst rescuing survivors in a magma-infested environment, but with a few new tricks and gimmicks. This time around you'll have to ensure you don't stay in the darkness for too long, as ghosts will chase you down and start sapping your health. Luckily, handy phosphorescent objects that will lead you through the darkened tunnels unscathed will be at your disposal. We're expecting a good result.



Finally, PSN Plus subscribers can expect the following during September:

- *Sam & Max: Devil's Playground* (entire season)
- minis: *Vector Tower Defense*, *Echoes*
- PSone Classic: *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee*
- Full game trial: *Warhawk* (with exclusive 50% discount for Plus members on purchase), *Inferno Pool*
- Exclusive discounts: *LBP: Ico* and *Shadow of the Colossus* costume pack – 50%, *Metal Gear Solid* (PSone) – 50%, *Warhawk* – 20%, *PixelJunk Shooter* – 20%
- DLC: Exclusive *UFC Undisputed 2010* DLC
- Dynamic themes: Exclusive PlayStation Move theme, Exclusive 'Fish Tank' theme
- Premium avatars: *EyePet* Blue Goalie Avatar, *EyePet* DJ Avatar



VIDZONE CHANNEL SPOTLIGHT

This month we look at the best songs in the Daft Punk & Friends TV Channel



HOT CHIP - 'BOY FROM SCHOOL'

A melody of colour, where the Hot Chip Boys battle a monster and dodge the earth opening up. Very cool.



DAFT PUNK - 'AROUND THE WORLD'

The infamous clip directed by Michel Gondry. Like watching the original *Star Wars* movies, this is a cultural must-see.



CROOKERS FT. MIIKE SNOW - 'REMEDY'

This is primarily a lesson in graphic design and also tips on how to be a charming vandal. We dig it.



VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available free on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 13,000 music videos at the push of a button!

WHAT IS PSN?

The PlayStation Network (PSN) is free to join and free to play. No subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



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DLC

RED DEAD REDEMPTION LEGENDS AND KILLERS

Make busy killin' or get busy dyin'

This new pack (the first of a bunch that you'll need to pay for) sounds impressive on paper, with nine new multiplayer maps, eight character models from 2004's *Red Dead Revolver*, 10 new Trophies to collect and a new weapon – the tomahawk. This new weapon crosses over into the single-player mode too and it's awesome to use, though a little overpowered. We're pleased that it can be both a melee and throwing weapon and you'll guffaw the first few times it makes a new home in someone's back.

The new locations are a mix of wilderness and settlements, taken from the single-player game, and not all of them offer the chance to play all the modes. Fort Mercer's definitely one of the more successful maps for Gang Shootout and Grab the Bag (it also incorporates Shootout and Gold Rush) as it's a riot in the regular gang hideout missions. One of the more open maps, Punto Orgullo, is a mess of winding gullies so Hold Your Own ends up being lacklustre.

It's to be expected that there'd be highlights



and lowlights amongst a map pack, but *Redemption's* slowish nature (to be considered a competitive action title) works against it for many of the maps. It's still a great game but its strength lies in cooperative multi, and while this offers value for money in terms of injecting stuff, the overall level of fun is lower than it should be.

VERDICT:

There are more misses than hits in this paid for pack, as the single-player locations don't translate as well to multi as you'd hope.

INFO

GENRE:
ACTION
RELEASE:
NOW
DISTRIBUTOR:
ROCKSTAR
DEVELOPER:
ROCKSTAR SAN
DIEGO
PLAYERS:
1-16
RRP:
\$15.95

DLC

BIOSHOCK 2: THE PROTECTOR TRIALS

Protect and serve

Remember those bits in *BioShock 2* where you had to defend the Little Sister as she scooped ADAM out of a corpse, while a horde of Splicers descended on you and her? If you liked it, you'll love the Protector Trials. It also reminds us a little bit of one of the *Spec Ops* missions in *Modern Warfare 2* where you had to defend Burger Town.

Taking place in six different confined environments (from the single-player game) with three different trials, you're given a predetermined loadout to fend off the murderous lunatics. The better you do in the different trials, the more stars you get which can be used to unlock more trials.

It's an arcade set-up, and you earn cash to buy EVE, meds and ammo by blasting Splicers. Smart players will scout the area for possible entry locations before setting their Little Sister down in order to make traps and prepare yourself, and you also have to be



flexible in your approach due to the different loadouts bestowed on you at the start of each trial. The longer she collects ADAM the more your scoring multiplier increases and successfully completing a stage earns you rank.

Protector Trials gets very challenging, and once you've clocked them all there's not as much incentive to go back and do it all again. Still, Trophy hounds get seven more reasons to jump back in to the dystopia, and while there are better shooters out there this is a surprisingly welcome distraction.

VERDICT:

A common riff for an uncommon shooter, and if you liked shooting things in *Rapture* you'll dig this. It includes hidden artworks.

INFO

GENRE:
SHOOTER
RELEASE:
NOW
DISTRIBUTOR:
2K GAMES
DEVELOPER:
2K MARIN
PLAYERS:
1
RRP:
\$6.95

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE

Enemy AI making you yawn? Feel like conquering the world? Take your skills online with this quintet of fantastic multiplayer titles. These offer the best bang for your buck!



MODERN WARFARE 2

You can't argue with numbers. There are a tonne of competitors online, plus the DLC adds to the abundant options available.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

The connection issues are fixed, so there's no excuse not to jump on, form a posse and start hunting for challenges.



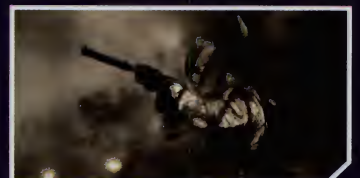
SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

It's like being in the arcades (remember those?) when you had a posse hanging around. Golden rule: winner stays on.



FIFA 10

Shooters aren't the only games that need explicit tactics, and the beautiful game is quietly brilliant with 10 versus 10 matches.



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction and storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics.



MULTIPLAYER

TRANSFORMERS: WAR FOR CYBERTRON

There'll be no peace treaty on this planet

INFO

GENRE:
ACTION
RELEASE:
NOW
DISTRIBUTOR:
ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER:
HIGH MOON
PLAYERS:
1-10
RRP:
\$79.95

War for Cybertron is pretty light for multiplayer options but that doesn't seem to deter the online community.

There are some fervent fans (you only need to look at our Facebook page for evidence of that) who are into it, and we'd put this down to the game's accessibility – Transformers are one of the most recognisable characters from an adult's youth and the popularity of the movies helps too. When an audience already understands and enjoys one of the major mechanics – turning from a humanoid robot into a vehicle – the seeds for success are already planted.

Standard multiplayer takes influence from *Modern Warfare*. You pick a character class from the four on offer and that immediately gives you certain attributes out on the battlefield in both humanoid and vehicle form. The Scientist class dominates in the air, leaving Soldiers, Scouts and Leaders on the ground. We also quite like the Soldier class and its 'spinning top of doom' special attack.

Modes will be familiar to anyone who's played, say *Modern Warfare* or *Battlefield* – *War for Cybertron* has certainly picked its modes from some of the best shooters around. Your transformations come in to more play here than the single player mode, so picking your class is at first a matter of experimentation but then becomes a bit more carefully considered. No matter your class you'll spend a lot of time smashing up your mates and online peers with melee attacks. Like publisher stablemate *Call of Duty* your characters can also level up and also use killstreaks.



Frustratingly, since the latest lot of DLC came out, you'll be booted from the server if you don't have some of the new maps. We didn't see an option to veto an upcoming map between rounds unlike in *Escalation* mode.

It's this mode that will draw people back. The idea is to survive waves and waves of enemies with three other players, picking up currency from fallen foes whilst working in a team.

As the waves progress you're obviously going to see an increase in enemies and their toughness increases too, and you need to rely on pods to replenish your health and ammo – we often found ourselves totally sapped of both. As well as spending your points on the essentials you can choose to open up gates within levels to progress to a new area, but this will need a contribution from your team mates too, who are also trying to balance their own health and ammo.

Multiplayer is definitely *War for Cybertron*'s strongest attribute and it's immediately accessible. With a bunch of likeminded mates you'll find an entertaining diversion until the next big thing hits.

VERDICT:

The reason to buy *Transformers: War for Cybertron*. Standard multi's a bit clunky but *Escalation* is a real blast.

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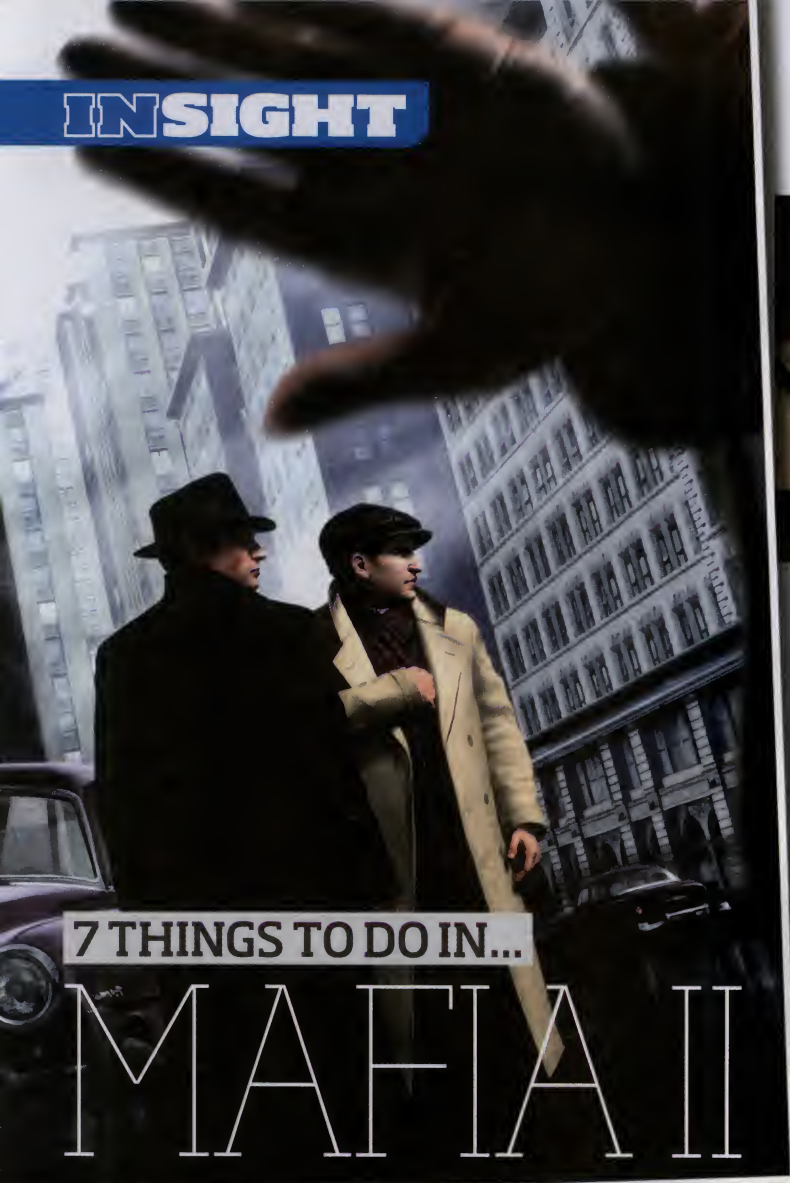
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7 THINGS TO DO IN...

MAFIA II

While Vito's adventure is linear and finely crafted, there's still plenty of opportunity to explore Empire Bay and make more of your own fun. Here's how!



HELP OUT A STRANGER

It's a fact that Vito is a man who isn't afraid to break the law – in fact he revels in it. Offset your car-jacking levels by helping a woman get hers back on the road. In the mission 'Home Sweet Home', after you've spoken to your mother head out on the road and walk toward the mission marker. On the other side of the road is this charming couple. Pay attention to the conversation and show her your chivalrous side at the right moment.



PIMP YOUR RIDE

We'd put money on Xzibit loving this part of *Mafia II*. When your wallet allows it, get your favourite car and take it to a bodyshop. You're going to need between \$1000 – \$2000 for the full effect (see above for two we made earlier). Cars from the '40s tend to look like they've just come from the set of *Grease*, especially when painted in racing colours. '50s machines could be right at home on a race track. Speaking of which...



POWERSLIDE THE ESSES

It's no Mount Panorama, but there is a particularly sweet set of corners at the northern end of the southern part of the map – you'll see an icon for a diner there. Head up the hill and through the esses until you reach the bridge. Now, turn around, switch the car handling to 'simulation' and head back down the hill with your tail out. It's easy to lose it on the second corner but feather the throttle while keeping the left stick steady and you'll be set.



HELP SOMEONE VOMIT

This one's a combo of being a sight and aural gag – literally. After a boozy night out on the town, Eddie, Joe and Vito are taking a trip home when Eddie's inebriation becomes a bit too much (there are other factors affecting his stomach but that's a surprise). When he gives you the cue to, uh, release the chunder, you can either slam on the brakes or, if you're feeling cruel, keep driving. We know which outcome we prefer: vomit is always funny.



APPRECIATE THE MAGIC OF CAPITALISM

One of the best parts of *Mafia II* is its attention to detail, and the radical shift that happens between decades. Fashion changes (though Vito still rocks his leather jacket), cars are faster and handle better, and the advertising's different in a post-war boom. All the billboards ditch their propaganda and instead focus on vices and luxuries like cigarettes, beer and cars. It's not just the subject matter, but the art style too. Take a drive around the city, soak it up and see for yourself.

BREAK THE FOURTH WALL

We're confident that this only happens once during the game. After sneaking into the slaughterhouse in the mission called 'Balls and Beans', you'll soon find your self in a massive room with two butchers and a goon. One of the butchers – he's the guy with the big knife – has quite clearly had enough of this life and picks a new vocation. We don't want to ruin the joke so just hang around for a while and hug the bench with to duck into cover – you won't be seen.



FINISH THE GAME ON HARD DIFFICULTY

If you're an action game nut, or just confident with third-person shooters, you've probably started the game on hard anyway. Good on you. It'll stretch the story mode out and your sense of satisfaction (and Trophy collection) will increase. There's more to it than that though; tangible (virtual) awards exist too in the form of 14 pin-ups and they can be accessed from the main menu at the front end of the game. They're quite cheeky, and the art style is lush.

TROPHY HUNTER

Looking for gold, silver, and bronze in your favourite titles? Here are three to grab in *Mafia II*



GET RICH OR DIE FLYIN'

The aim is to jump for more than 20 metres and land on all four wheels. Easy. Go to the northwest part of the map via the tunnel from downtown. Plant the accelerator as you come around the sweeping left-hander, and steer your jalopy towards the centre of the road – it's pretty easy to accidentally clip it into either oncoming traffic or cars travelling in the same direction. You don't need to have a totally souped up motor but it does help!



STUCK UP

Got a gun? Got a fast car? You're more than half way there to getting this Trophy where you have to rob five stores in five minutes. We recommend a mixture of clothing stores and petrol stations, and there's a fair cluster of them in the middle of the map. However try to avoid the boutiques – there are usually hired goons inside. Simply enter the store, find the assistant, point your gun at them and rob the register. For extra emphasis, draw your shotgun.



HAIRDRESSER

This took a few attempts for us to get it, so don't feel too bad if you drop the difficulty down to easy to get this. You need to kill five enemies with headshots in rapid succession. We nailed it on the last level – Per Aspera Ad Astra – just at the top of the stairs outside the mansion. Memorise where the bad guys come from and pick something with low recoil (like the standard handgun). Tap the aim button and you should lock onto their heads.

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INTERMISSION

NEW RELEASES ON DVD & BLU-RAY

DIRECTOR: DANIEL BARBER | **CAST:** MICHAEL CAINE, EMILY MORTIMER, CHARLIE CREED-MILES, LIAM CUNNINGHAM | **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

HARRY BROWN (MA15+)

Harry Brown is the violent story of a recently widowed ex-Royal Marine living on a crime-ridden estate who turns to vigilantism after his only friend is brutally murdered by some scumbag kids. It's *Death Wish* crossed with *Gran Torino* starring the most English man in all of England. Softies may balk at Harry's hardcore methods for exacting his revenge but we loved it. Essential viewing for anyone who loves a pitch-perfect revenge drama, and the way the intelligent script lets the audience absorb Harry's backstory rather than force-feeding it to them is superb.

VERDICT:

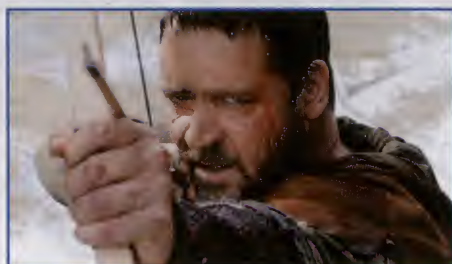
Taut, confronting and hugely rewarding, *Harry Brown* is one of the best movies we've seen this year. Harry Brown is the old man we'll want to be.

9

IF YOU
LIKE THIS
TRY...

Gran Torino

Another old man who doesn't take shit from punk kids



ROBIN HOOD (M)

DIRECTOR: RIDLEY SCOTT
CAST: RUSSELL CROWE, CATE BLANCHETT, WILLIAM HURT, MATTHEW MACFADYEN, KEVIN DURAND, MARK ADDY
AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

Strapping on the tight-tights like fellow Aussie Erroll Flynn did 72 years before; Russell Crowe's Robin Hood ain't exactly merry.

Ridley Scott's version of this classic tale offers great visuals and decent performances but deviates a little too much from the legend for our tastes.

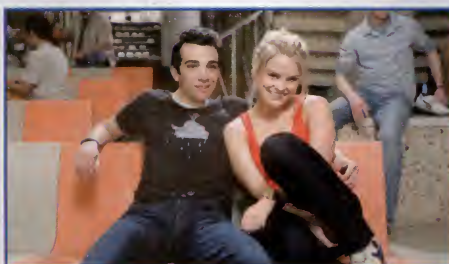
After reluctantly returning to Sherwood Forrest from the Crusades, Hood decides his 'hood needs some cleaning up. He then teams with a motley crew that become his (un)merry men, as well as the recently widowed Lady Marion (Cate Blanchett); swash, buckling and death-via-arrows ensues.

Although this is produced to the highest standard, it's a bit on the sadsack side and lacks the sense of fun and adventure that made previous retellings so rad.

VERDICT:

Decent acting and a few great action sequences, but missing thrills.

6



SHE'S OUT OF MY LEAGUE (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: JIM FIELD SMITH
CAST: JAY BARUCHEL, ALICE EVE, T.J. MILLER, MIKE VOGEL, NATE TORRENCE, LINDSAY SLOANE
AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

This isn't a documentary about Adam's love-life up until this point. We know, we were thrown by the title too. You're actually reading about a likable, goofy rom com where an average joe, Kirk (Jay Baruchel), falls arse-backwards into a relationship with the perfect woman, Molly (Alice Eve).

The pairing is highly unlikely, given she's a 10 out of 10 and he has the face of a slapped preying mantis. As a result, Kirk's lack of confidence and the influence of his sleazeball, gross-out friends begin to inexorably pick away at the relationship.

The screenplay is snappy, the characters believable and though it isn't quite comedic gold, it's a solid silver.

VERDICT:

It's no *There's Something About Mary*, but there are some laugh-out-loud moments.

7



THE SIMPSONS: THE THIRTEENTH SEASON (PG)

CREATOR: MATT GROENING
CAST: DAN CASELLANETA, JULIE KAVNER, NANCY CARTWRIGHT, YEARDLEY SMITH, HANK AZARIA, HARRY SHEARER, MARCIA WALLACE, TRESS MACNEILLE, PAMELA HAYDEN, PIERCE BROSNAN, MATTHEW PERRY, GEORGE TAKEI, PAUL NEWMAN, RICHARD GERE, BEN STILLER, STAN LEE
AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

Season 13 doesn't quite measure up to the mid-'90s halcyon days, but it's still good.

The huge list of guest stars we printed above should help jog your memory, but Season 13 features the one where Homer gets his jaw wired shut, the one where Springfield is named America's fattest town and the one where the computer is Pierce Brosnan and it tries to kill Homer.

VERDICT:

This was also the last full season to use traditional cel animation. Get it.

9



HUNG: THE COMPLETE FIRST SEASON (MA15+)

CREATORS: COLETTE BURSON, DIMITRY LIPKIN

CAST: TOM JANE, JANE ADAMS, ANNE HECHÉ, EDDIE JEMISON
AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

Hung follows Ray Drecker (Tom Jane, who you probably know mostly from *The Punisher*), a divorced and broke history teacher and basketball coach at a high school in suburban Detroit. He's also the father of twin teenagers who are currently living with their remarried mother. After a fire destroys the childhood home Ray still owns and lives in, he's left with pretty much nothing. Nothing but *his enormous penis*. With the help of a female friend he finds a way to monetise said penis; he becomes a male prostitute and his friend Tanya becomes his pimp. Typically high-quality HBO stuff. Very entertaining.

VERDICT:

It's funny, original and stuffed with sex. The writing is snappy and Jane's acting is great.

8



44 INCH CHEST (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: MALCOLM VENVILLE

CAST: RAY WINSTONE, IAN MCHANE, JOHN HURT, TOM WILKINSON, STEPHEN DILLANE

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

Colin Diamond (the always awesome Ray Winstone) is a successful car salesman. After discovering his wife Liz is having an affair with another man; however, he has an emotional breakdown.

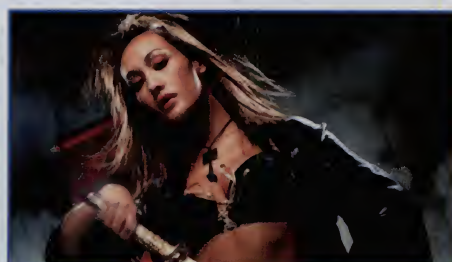
His friends – suave homosexual gambler Meredith (McShane), bigoted Old Man Peanut (Hurt), straight-shooting Archie (Wilkinson) and hot-head Mal (Dillane) – convince him to kidnap his wife's new lover and then encourage him to torture and kill him.

Penned by Louis Mellis and David Scinto, the writers of the absolutely excellent British gangster film *Sexy Beast*, *44 Inch Chest* doesn't quite measure up to that but it's a solid drama. Dialogue driven and filled to the brim with expletives, a worthwhile viewing.

VERDICT:

We've heard it described as *Reservoir Dogs* crossed with *Last Orders*. We agree.

9



THE KING OF FIGHTERS (M)

DIRECTOR: GORDON CHAN

CAST: SEAN FARIS, MAGGIE Q, WILL YUN, LEE RAY PARK, BERNICE LIU, DAVID LEITCH

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

It's a pity lead actress Maggie Q, who acts quite capably, will certainly be hassled for not fulfilling horny fanboy desires as the impossibly buxom fighter, Mai Shiranui.

Rather than try to string together the non-plots of a dozen videogame pugilists, the writers opted to head off into bizarro world. All of the combatants are jacking into a *King of Fighters* MMORPG ala *The Matrix* and are tasked with stopping a megalomaniac from defiling the very fabric of reality. Much like the scriptwriters did with this movie.

Couple that heaped helping of WTF with hokey Japanese philosophy talk, cardboard cutout characters and this whole movie becomes a contrived mess.

VERDICT:

Decent fighting, but it takes waaaaaay too long to get there and it doesn't last.

4

Now available to rent or own on **PlayStation®Store**

The PlayStation Network Video Store offers hundreds of titles available to rent or own at the click of a button!

DIRECTOR: FRANK CORACI | **CAST:** ADAM SANDLER, DREW BARRYMORE, CHRISTINE TAYLOR, ALLEN COVERT, MATTHEW GLAVE, STEVE BUSCEMI, BILLY IDOL | **AVAILABILITY:** OWN \$17.99 | **SIZE:** 1175MB (SD)

THE WEDDING SINGER (M)

TOP 10 MOVIES ON DEMAND

1. Valentine's Day
2. Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun-Li
3. Ninja Assassin
4. Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call – New Orleans
5. The Last House on the Left
6. Sherlock Holmes
7. The Wolfman
8. Armored
9. Zombieland
10. Green Zone

Ah yes, a movie hailing from a time when Adam Sandler's presence guaranteed non-stop laughs. The time is 1985 and rock-hopeful Robby Hart has a steady gig as a wedding singer and a fiancée who is about to dump him and jinx Van Halen to break up.

When Robbie is inevitably shafted at the altar he quickly becomes the worst wedding singer in the world. Upon reaching rock bottom he meets Julia (Drew Barrymore) and soon realises it's his destiny to save her from her boorish fiancé, Glenn Goodie.

Yeah, okay. It's the typical rom com setup, but this is jam packed with (classic Sandler) irreverent humor, great cameos from the usual collection of misfits and it mercilessly rips on the '80s to boot.

While maintaining an almost perfect balance of laughs and lovey-dovey stuff, *The Wedding Singer* is also an infinitely quotable film. Watch it and understand the differences between porno tongue and church tongue, why all the mutants get fat at table nine and why love stinks for ladies with sideburns.

VERDICT:

A great film to re-watch with your buddies and your better half. That's a rare feat. It's aged like a fine safari suit.

8

INTERMISSION

NEW RELEASES ON DVD & BLU-RAY

DIRECTOR: HIROSHI NISHIKIORI **CAST:** KOICHI DOMOTO, MINAMI TAKAYAMA, RICA FUKAMI **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

JYU-OH-SEI (PLANET OF THE BEAST KING) - COLLECTION (MA15+)

Twin brothers Thor and Rai lived a charmed life in the space colonies of the Balkan system, until the scheming space president had their parents killed and exiled them to the prison planet of Chimaera. In this world of extreme weather and gigantic carnivorous plants, the prisoner population has formed clans where only the strong survive, and only the strongest lead.

Thor is unusual for an anime hero – he doesn't doubt his own abilities. However, he does suffer from extreme 'survivor's guilt.' This series is also remarkable for the fact that it doesn't drag on forever – rather it's an expertly crafted mini-series that you could easily burn through in a marathon session. You'll probably want to, too, as Thor's struggle to rise to the supreme rank of 'Beast King' and escape Chimaera makes for gripping viewing.

VERDICT:

A techno-medieval odyssey; a battle for survival through supremacy on a future world of man-eating plants. Watch it back-to-back.

8



KUROKAMI: THE ANIMATION - COLLECTION 1 (M)

DIRECTOR: TSUNEO KOBAYASHI
CAST: DAISUKE NAMIKAWA, NORIKO SHITAYA
AVAILABLE ON: DVD

Keita Ibuki is your typical average high school attending dude; yet one by one, his closest friends and family are being rubbed out in mysterious accidents. He soon learns that every person walking the earth has two identical clones, and that if you can kill your doppelgangers you can gain their power. Er, just like Jet Li did in *The One*.

A secret society of self-styled 'chosen ones' is wiping out their own clones to gain special super powers, and Ibuki soon finds himself entwined in the martial arts mayhem of their supernatural conspiracies. Also: tits.

VERDICT:

A melange of biff, cute birds, pathos and street punks with Highlander powers.

8

ONE PIECE (UNCUT) - COLLECTION 1 (M)

DIRECTOR: ATSUKI SHIMIZU
CAST: MAYUMI TANAKA, AKEMI OKAMURA, KASUYA NAKAI
AVAILABLE ON: DVD

Meet Monkey D. Luffy, super-stretchy seafarer obsessed with becoming the 'King of the Pirates.' In Japan, *One Piece* is even more popular than *Naruto* and *Bleach*, thanks to its bat-poop bonkers world of sea monsters, eccentric, super-powered brigands, and slapstick – it's utterly over-the-top action. This collection takes us right back to the beginning of Luffy's adventures, though this time the series is completely unedited and uncut, free of the digital censorship that tainted the old version. Looking a little dated now, but it's still top-shelf shonen action.

Seriously bizarre high seas mayhem, now uncensored and uncut. Join Luffy on his quest to become the strongest, insanest pirate of them all.

VERDICT:

If you're going to watch *One Piece* this is the form to watch it in.

7

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM 00 SECOND SEASON - VOL. 1 (M)

DIRECTOR: SEIJI MIZUSHIMA
CAST: HIROSHI KAMIYA, HIROYUKI YOSHINO, SHINICHIRO MIKI
AVAILABLE ON: DVD

In the distant future, militarism runs rampant on the high frontier. Human colonies constructed in gravity wells near Earth are rife with political discontent, and rebel and government forces wage war with giant robots designed for zero gravity combat: 'mobile suits.'

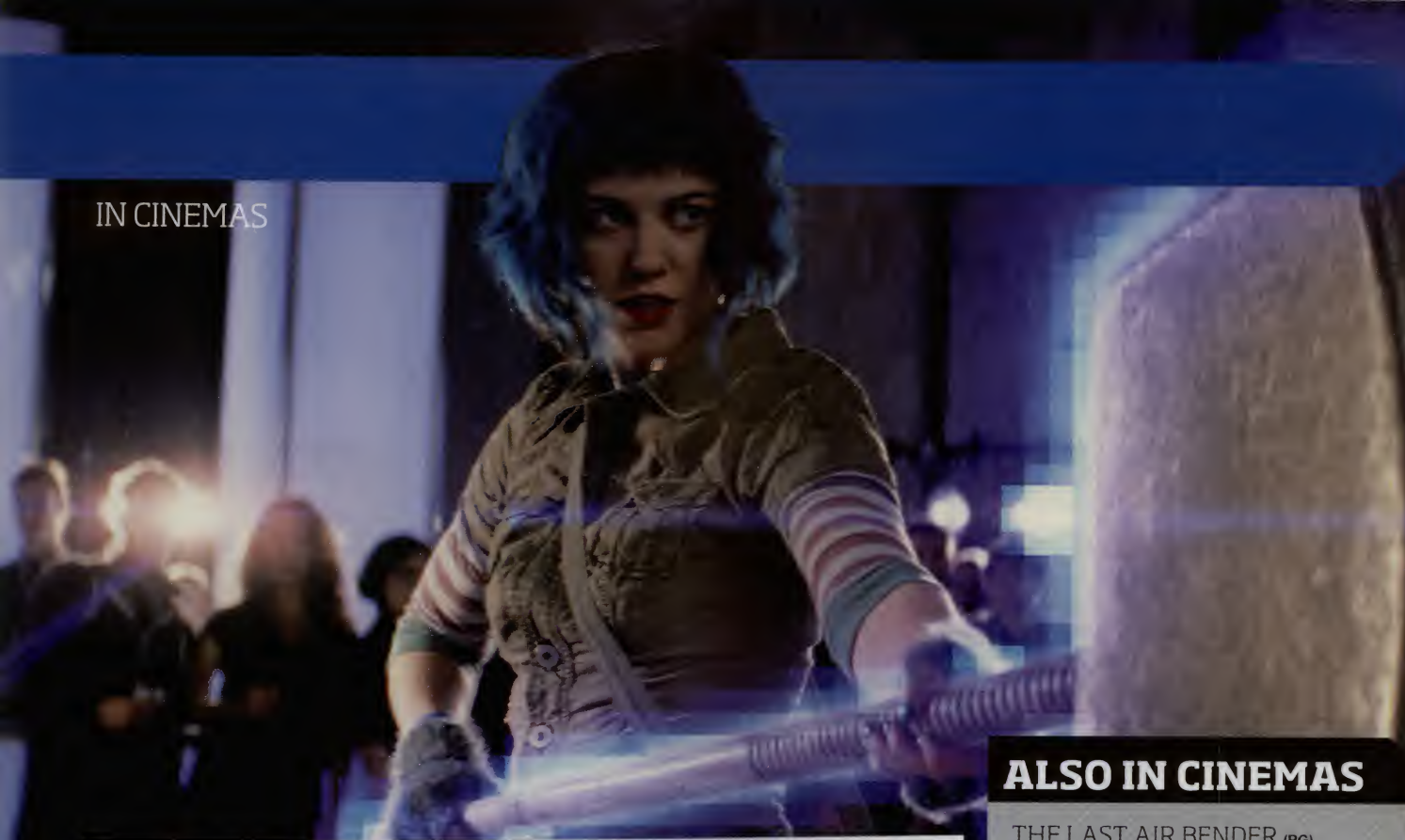
If you've been following this series for the past 30-odd years it's been running, your understanding of the sprawling, Byzantine plot will give some context to the melodrama and pew-pew laser battle action. If you haven't, it may be a good idea to skim the Wiki, or something. Your call.

VERDICT:

Epic deep space giant robot combat, with a huge cast and some very, very silly haircuts.

8

IN CINEMAS



ALSO IN CINEMAS

THE LAST AIR BENDER (PG)

DIRECTOR: M. NIGHT SHYAMALAN

CAST: NOAH RINGER, DEV PATEL, NICOLA PELTZ, JACKSON RATHBONE, CLIFF CURTIS

Aang (Ringer), a young chap who has the power to manipulate air to his will, is the lynchpin who will stop the Fire Nation from enslaving the Water, Air and Earth realms. Aang has the potential to master all four of the elements, and is the only thing that can stop the Fire Lord Ozai (Curtis) and his son, Zuko (Patel) from fulfilling their dastardly plan. Based on the Nickelodeon cartoon, *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, is the live-action version that attempts to condense the first series of the popular show into a feature length movie.

It doesn't really work. Member of the audience that are there because their kids love it will be totally baffled by what's going on because of the confusing and perplexing plot, while older fans will be disappointed by the mediocre acting and dull fight scenes. While the special effects are kind of cool this is a big mess.

FOUR LIONS (M)

DIRECTOR: CHRIS MORRIS

CAST: RIZ AHMED, ADEEL AKHTAR, KAYVAN NOVAK, ARSHER ALI, NIGEL LINDSAY

A radical British Muslim, Omar (Ahmed) forms a terrorist cell comprised of his moronic but lovable brother Waj (Novak), dumb-arse bomb maker Fessel (Akhtar), and surprise convert Barry (Lindsay). Barry, however, recruits wannabe rapper Hassan (Ali) to the group when Omar and Waj are in Pakistan at a Mujahideen training camp with plans to attack a London institution.

This black comedy takes a controversial subject and pokes at the stupidity of both the group as they bicker and fight amongst themselves, as well as the incompetent police force that are unable to deal with the situation. The 'lions' have a dynamic that's instantly recognisable and identifiable; Omar the group leader is leant on by his brother who constantly needs him, and white outcast Barry is obviously not wanted despite his best efforts. Taking on risky material has paid off for director Morris who is no stranger to controversy; *Four Lions* is very, very funny.



DIRECTOR: EDGAR WRIGHT | **CAST:** MICHAEL CERA, ELLEN WONG, KIERAN CULKIN, MARY ELIZABETH WINSTEAD | **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

SCOTT PILGRIM VS THE WORLD (M)

We're calling it right now: *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World* is going to be one of the most talked about films of the year. It's going to be a hit with gamers, people who love comic books and those with an appreciation of loud, energetic music.

Based on the comic book of the same name Scott Pilgrim meets and falls in love with Ramona Flowers. His attraction is based on a flimsy pretext and he's pretty glib about the impact this has on his current girlfriend, Knives Chau. Problem is, Ramona has seven evil exes that need to be defeated so she and Scott can continue their relationship.

Edgar Wright has taken a few risky steps directing this and it's unlike anything you've ever seen before.

That's not saying this is a brilliant film that everyone's going to love, and it'll take about half of the film for non-Scott Pilgrim followers to appreciate the style which takes far more precedence over substance.

The biggest hurdle is the attitude and the blasé sentiment that's banded about and it's easy to criticise Scott Pilgrim as being the poster boy for fickle, dumb kids. As visual entertainment, though, you'll struggle to find anything more exciting. It's fast paced, full of references to videogames and has a cracking soundtrack penned by Nigel Godrich and Beck Hansen. Once you're into the swing of it, you'll adore it. If you don't break to its frenetic, exciting will it'll be the longest two hours of your life.

THE BEST PSN GAMES

on PlayStation®Store

BRAID
DEVELOPER: Hothead
PLAYERS: 1

A charming platformer that incorporates one of last decade's most used mechanics – time manipulation – whilst wrapped up in gorgeous graphics. Incredibly addictive and charming as hell, it's made even better when you discover it was all made by one man. Buy it.



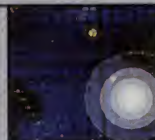
WIPEOUT HD
DEVELOPER: SCE
PLAYERS: 1-8

Yes, it's a HD remix of tracks from the PSP versions, but *HD* is too sublime to ignore. Utterly gorgeous, running at a blistering framerate and handles superbly. Mandatory. We may not have a fully-fledged PS3 version of the series for now, but this will do fine.



EVERYDAY SHOOTER
DEVELOPER: Queasy Games
PLAYERS: 1

Don't be fooled by the sparse art style. This cunningly blends music in with the action that turns it from a dual-stick shooting whimsy into a highly addictive blaster. It's very easy to lose hours and hours to this game as you strive to make it through the tough stages.



FLOWER
DEVELOPER: thatgamecompany
PLAYERS: 1

High concept and totally pretty, it plays like a dream. Guide petals on the wind using the motion-sensing of your DualShock 3. You will be amazed. More than one OPS staffer has lost sleep trapped in this game.



MARVEL VS CAPCOM 2
DEVELOPER: Capcom
PLAYERS: 1-2

It's by no means 'straight' *Street Fighter*, and nor should it. Stuffed with 56 characters, this three-on-three brawler is a visual and aural explosion. The HD treatment is superbly done. If you're a fighting nut, you should have this already.



BIONIC COMMANDO REARMED
DEVELOPER: GRIN
PLAYERS: 1

Bionic Commando Rearmed is a prime example of what many love about the PSN: being a platform for updates of classics. It's pure gameplay – and rock hard. We don't know why you'd bother playing the recent remake instead.



SIMPLY THE BEST...

The best of the best of the best of the best

ADVENTURE



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

"GTA/IV is a game 10 out of 10 was designed for – a game that takes your rising, constantly spiralling expectations and vapourises them with a product so sublime you'll tell your grandkids about it."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North PUBLISHER: Rockstar PLAYERS: 1-16

10



UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

"Easily the best PS3 exclusive to date, *Uncharted 2* combines genre-defining visuals, high adventure and cinematic intensity like nothing before. Don't miss the original either. Get both, this second."

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-12

10



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

"Bigger, badder and more epic than *GTA/IV*? Yep. If attention to detail, vigilante violence and skinning cougars interests you in the slightest, do not miss *Red Dead Redemption*. Buy it now. You're a daisy if you do."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



GOD OF WAR III

"Easily eclipses anything out there and reclaims its rightful place at the pinnacle of its genre. Believe the hyperbole. *God of War III* deserves an honoured place – both in your own personal collection and the mighty PlayStation Parthenon"

DEVELOPER: Santa Monica Studios PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1

10



ASSASSIN'S CREED II

"A far more compelling story than the revolutionary original, there's more to see and do, and more ways of dealing death than before. Ubisoft has tweaked the climbing mechanic to make it feel part puzzler, but all action."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
PLAYERS: 1

9



HEAVY RAIN

"Kudos to Quantic Dream for continuing to evolve its unique brand of gameplay and storytelling. Compelling, different, addictive – *Heavy Rain* is all of these things. This game will appeal to gamers and non-gamers alike. We just need people to stop telling us it's a revolution."

DEVELOPER: Quantic Dream
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1

8



MGS4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

"An incredibly layered gaming experience that is almost inexhaustible. One of the best games available on the PlayStation 3, and definitely one of the top exclusives. Buy and play this videogame now. Seriously."

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



JUST CAUSE 2

"Although there are a few technical shortcomings, *Just Cause 2* generates more fun per second than any other open-world title. So much better than the original, Avalanche has crafted one of the most exciting and entertaining open-world romps we've experienced in years."

DEVELOPER: Avalanche
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners
PLAYERS: 1

9

SHOOTER



BORDERLANDS

"Borderlands starts out great and only gets better from there. It takes the best elements of RPGs and shooters and fuses them, and it's simply the most rewarding co-op to date."

DEVELOPER: Gearbox PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-4

9



KILLZONE 2

"Visually Killzone 2 runs through the competition like a bull in the

proverbial china shop. Lucky then, that the game's design and story matches the lofty production values. Killzone 2 is the first-person shooter evolved."

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



BIOSHOCK 2

"Plot-wise, this doesn't match the original. However, the combat

has been spliced to near-perfection. A more than worthy sequel that should easily suck you back under for another tumble."

DEVELOPER: 2K Marin
PUBLISHER: 2K
PLAYERS: 1-10

9



MODERN WARFARE 2

"It's almost like three games in one, stuffed with moments that will leave you shocked and breathless with excitement. Superbly crafted, MW2 is, with its older brother, a pinnacle of this generation's games."

DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-18

10

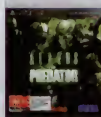


IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

"It's not an FPS, but shooting is all you do – in the skies above Europe. Head-turning attention to detail and intense action. Awesome, actually."

DEVELOPER: Gaijin
Entertainment PUBLISHER:
AIE PLAYERS: 1-16

9



ALIENS VS PREDATOR

"Possibly the greatest movie-inspired game ever. This positively oozes atmosphere and is a must for the fans. Wonderfully visualised, incredibly immersive and true to its inspiration."

DEVELOPER: Rebellion
PUBLISHER: Sega
PLAYERS: 1-4

9



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

"In almost every way *Bad Company 2* technically outclasses the original, but that's to be expected. We just miss the mischief. But maybe that's just us. Even still, this is a top-tier shooter that's more than up to the task of standing side-by-side with *MW2*."

DEVELOPER: DICE
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-24

8



GHOST-BUSTERS

"Well-honed and accessible controls, some spectacular visual effects, excellent pace, great level design, incredible attention to detail – all of these essential traits combined with the *Ghostbusters* universe and come together for a thoroughly addictive experience."

DEVELOPER: Terminal Reality
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-4

9



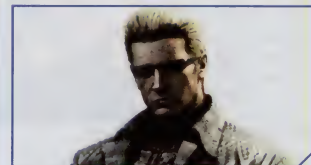
MAG

"You will need to put some hours in before you get to unlock the best goodies, and it's the kind of game that requires fairly frequent attention, but the pay off is one of the singularly most compelling and captivating shooters to date."

DEVELOPER: Zipper Interactive
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-256

9

TOP 5 GAME PSYCHOS



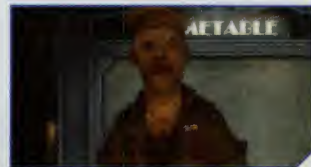
ALBERT WESKER (RESIDENT EVIL SERIES)

Wesker reminds us of any Weyland Yutani exec that wants to harness the power of a creature that's more likely to eat your face than cooperate. Classically, he doesn't care how many people are killed in the process.



GLADOS (PORTAL)

Taunting, calculating, psychotic. GLaDOS is so entertaining as while she only wants to be malicious (and is incredibly pleading about it) she isn't revealed until the last five minutes of the game. Utterly remorseless and totally unforgettable.



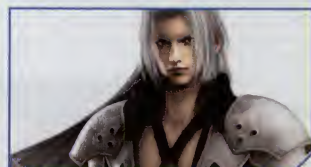
FRANK FONTAINE (BIOSHOCK)

Frank ain't Frank, not to begin with, and he's a master of manipulation, capable of using the underclass to his advantage. We doubt he'd pass a police check if he wanted to re-open an orphanage, too.



PHILLIP CLYDE (ARMY OF TWO)

We think this quote will do it: "I'm gonna kill you both, drain all your blood, take out your bones, put your body in a big chair with some elves and reindeer, sit on your lap, and tell you all the cool shit I want for Christmas!"



SEPHIROTH (FINAL FANTASY VII)

Dude considers himself as a god in order to take over the entire freakin' planet. He calls for a meteor to destroy the world so that he can increase his power, plus he loves stabbing defenceless flower girls.

THE BEST PSP GAMES

Small system. Big games.

GTA: VICE CITY STORIES

DEVELOPER: Rockstar Leeds
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1



This is about as remarkable as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D GTA, on PSP. Also? Phil Collins is in it.

MH: FREEDOM UNITE

DEVELOPER: Capcom
PUBLISHER: THQ
PLAYERS: 1-4



Monster Hunter is a system seller in native Japan, and it deserves that accolade here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to, and rewards in spades if you're able to put the effort in.

WIPEOUT PULSE

DEVELOPER: SCE Liverpool
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-8



Beautiful, and weighted just right, it's a futurist's dream. Depending on which day of the week you ask us this jips *Burnout Legends* for best PSP racing game.

GTA: CHINATOWN WARS

DEVELOPER: Rockstar Leeds
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1



Hilarious. Violent. Addictive. Yes, it's a port of a DS title, but it's a port done right, and still it rebels against the style of other GTA games. A tightly scripted, mature and entertaining package.

METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions
PUBLISHER: Mindscape
PLAYERS: 1-6



Polished, well-produced and thought-out, this is a must-have. The story's great and the action's addictive. Buy this game immediately, and a PSP if you must. This is a title no gamer should miss.

GOD OF WAR: CHAINS OF OLYMPUS

DEVELOPER: Ready at Dawn
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1



With fantastic graphics and tighter-than-hades gameplay, being shrunk to PSP size hasn't made this series any less epic.

RACING



PURE

"Pure shot straight from nowhere to rub *MotorStorm*'s face in its glorious graphics and watertight gameplay. It's not as varied as its main competitor, but damn does it play well."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock **PUBLISHER:** Madman **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9

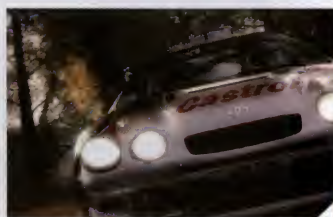


GRAN TURISMO 5: PROLOGUE

"An anemic game package that somehow survives by being what is quite possibly the greatest example of audio-visual excellence on the PlayStation 3 thus far. Well worth checking out."

DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

"*Dirt 2* is snazzy, but it's too boneheaded for its own good, has few real rally cars and very little proper rallying. The original *Dirt* remains a far better example of a next gen rally game. More varied and far less US-centric."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9



SPLIT/SECOND

"*Split/Second* hasn't usurped the arcade racing king (see: the *Burnout* games), but this series debut signals it as a more than worthy adversary. There are plenty of tricks here to tempt you away from *Burnout Paradise*."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock Studios
PUBLISHER: THQ
PLAYERS: 1-8

8



RACE DRIVER GRID

"This bastard rock n' roll son of V8 Supercars and Colin McRae: *Dirt* is hot. Your lower jaw will relax. Your eyelids will take five. And you'll start to drool. Shame it ditched its roots though, and the V8 DLC Codies promised has vanished."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners **PLAYERS:** 1-12

9



NEED FOR SPEED SHIFT

"*SHIFT* bucks the trend of all-American games, and treats you as an intelligent racer. Whether you want to get under the bonnet and tinker, or even just race with what you're given, this truly is a must-have package. It's also damn pretty and very, very noisy."

DEVELOPER: Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



MOTORSTORM

"In our humble opinion *MotorStorm* was the best launch title on the fledgling PS3 – and arguably it's one of the greatest launch titles of all time. Defining next-gen racing as a platform upon which smart AI and terrain deformation could thrive, *MotorStorm* reinvented the arcade racer."

DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

"Within its niche sub-genre, *MC: LA* reigns supreme. Well designed, rolling objectives, and an insane amount of customisation, *MC: LA* manages to rise above the rabble, easily beating off *Need for Speed Undercover* at its own game."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1-16

7



BURNOUT PARADISE

"You'll lament the thoughtless removal of splitscreen and the lack of a retry button, but you'll marvel at the slick frame rate, the sun drenched city, and Criterion's stellar commitment to free downloadable content. Awesome."

DEVELOPER: Criterion
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

MUSIC & SPORTS



ROCK BAND 2

"Rock Band 2 is the best music game around. Import Rock Band and LEGO Rock Band to your hard drive, access the DLC, and you'll have over 1000 songs at your fingertips. You can't fault it."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-8

10



THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND

"From the tunes to screaming hordes of women to psychedelic trips through acid-fuelled imaginations, Harmonix nailed it all. A landmark collaboration."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-4

9



SKATE 2

"Despite some frame rate issues, SKATE 2 is undoubtedly one of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense, the balance is sublime. Massively addictive."

DEVELOPER: EA Black Box PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-8

9



FIFA 10

"With its new momentum physics, stellar visuals, and engaging gameplay, 2009 was the year that the FIFA franchise managed to leap the perennial hurdle that is Pro Evolution Soccer. FIFA 10 is even better. Buy it, become obsessed."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-20

9



FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

"A spectacular game. Deeper and more technical, Fight Night Round 4 recreates the sweet science more faithfully than ever before. Remarkable detail, incredible animation."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-2

9



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

"With the 'vanilla' version's vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay but with a stack of new characters, all unlocked and at a bargain price, SSFIV belongs in everyone's collection."

DEVELOPER: Capcom PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2

10



UFC UNDISPUTED 2010

"The new undisputed baron of sports fighting, though its improvements aren't all that radical. But while it hasn't made leaps and bounds on last year's effort, it is a straight jab in the right direction."

DEVELOPER: Yuke's DISTRIBUTOR: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2

8



VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

"More of a tweak than a brand new experience, Virtua Tennis 2009 is still the most enjoyable tennis game available today. Along with player creation tools, the biggest plus is the chance to play in the Davis Cup."

DEVELOPER: Sumo DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA PLAYERS: 1-4

8



GUITAR HERO METALLICA

"Guitar Hero Metallica improves upon GHWT in a number ways – a more user-friendly HUD, superior presentation and more attention to detail. Great tracklist too, including 'Tuesday's Gone' by Lynyrd Skynyrd."

DEVELOPER: Neversoft DISTRIBUTOR: Activision PLAYERS: 1-4

8



DJ HERO

"A real surprise package, and tough to write off as a gimmick once you've played it. Utterly addictive, and great value when you consider it's chock full of great mixes you'll never hear anywhere else. An excellent game, and great for parties."

DEVELOPER: Freestyle Games DISTRIBUTOR: Activision PLAYERS: 1-2

9

MAGIC MOMENTS

ALIENS VS PREDATOR

CONSOLE: PlayStation 3 YEAR: 2010



THE MOMENT:

On December 4, 2009, this quote hit our inboxes from our local representative of SEGA's Australian team. "SEGA Australia can today confirm that the initial submission of *Aliens vs Predator* has been Refused Classification by the Classification Operations Board of Australia. We will continue to investigate all options available to us, including the possibility of appeal". We weren't surprised, but we were disappointed. Australia, again, the nation that tourists see as being an idyllic far away place, idolised for its freedoms and relaxed attitude but unable to allow a videogame that our contemporaries have no issue with.

We'd seen the videos of a Predator 'liberating' a soldier's head from his torso – spinal cord still attached – and though SEGA would find it tough getting AVP past the Board. It was definitely gruesome, a title designed for adults. Frustration crept in as we assumed that a specific Australian version just wouldn't happen, and that the game wouldn't be released here.

Many of our readers felt the same way. Not long after we posted the quote from SEGA, our Facebook page lit up with anger and despair.

Exactly two weeks later on December 18, this came through from Darren Macbeth, Managing Director of SEGA Australia. "It is with great pleasure that we announce the success of our appeal. We are particularly proud that the game will be released in its original entirety, with no content altered or removed whatsoever... We applaud the Classification Review Board on making a decision that clearly considers the context of the game, and is in line with the modern expectations of reasonable Australians".

Then on February 18, we ripped the head off a space marine.

We may have skipped lunch that day, we can't recall.



THE BEST PSone GAMES on PlayStation Store

FINAL FANTASY VII
DEVELOPER:
Square
PLAYERS: 1



The RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged, *Final Fantasy VII* is a modern classic and a worthy part of any credible videogame library.

DRIVER
DEVELOPER:
Reflections Interactive
(now Ubisoft
Reflections)
PLAYERS: 1



The original *Driver* hit PlayStation like a blast of fresh air. Hectic, powerslide-heavy car chases through 3D cities may be old hat now, but when *Driver* debuted it was the first of its kind. Essential.

CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED
DEVELOPER:
Naughty Dog
PLAYERS: 1



Crash Bandicoot 3 remains the best pure platformer on a PlayStation console. The *Jak & Daxter* series is unmatched but, as far as old-school run 'n jump action in purpose-built levels goes, *this* is the zenith.

MEDIEVIL
DEVELOPER: SCE
Studio Cambridge
PLAYERS: 1



It confounds us that the *MediEvil* series has been buried. It was brilliant. Fantasy hack 'n slash adventure with a sprinkling of the supernatural, *MediEvil* still does it better than many that have come since.

SYPHON FILTER
DEVELOPER:
Eidetic (now Sony
Bend)
PLAYERS: 1



Speaking of confounding, where the hell is *Syphon Filter*? We challenge you to play through the original again and tell us *Syphon Filter* doesn't deserve a PS3 comeback!

CRASH TEAM RACING
DEVELOPER:
Naughty Dog
PLAYERS: 1-4



This is kart racing at its finest. *ModNation Racers* is a lot of things – but even *ModNation Racers* doesn't boast the simply brilliant range of tracks that *CTR* does. Must own.

QUICK LIST

- 3D Dot Game Heroes** From Software 7
If you pine for the past this should keep you entertained.
- 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa** EA Canada 7
Blissful, *FIFA 10* football with a World Cup facelift. A bit pricey.
- 50 Cent: Blood on the Sand** Swordfish Studios 7
So dumb it's dangerously good. Better than it sounds.
- AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack** Harmonix 7
Bare-bones stuff, but the music is worth it. Fully exportable.
- RECOMMENDED Aliens vs. Predator: Rebellion** Developments 9
Possibly the best movie-inspired title ever. Beyond brutal.
- Alone in the Dark: Inferno** Eden Studios 6
Post-*Dead Space* this just doesn't cut the mustard. At all.
- Alpha Protocol** Obsidian Entertainment 5
Great concept, poor execution. Also? Worst male lead ever.
- Army of Two** EA Montreal 7
Solid co-op thrills make up for its wasted potential.
- Army of Two: The 40th Day** EA Montreal 7
Still dumb, but a lot tighter and more fun than the first.
- Ashes Cricket 2009** Transmission Games 6
Disappointing, but stick through the ugly for multiplayer beauty.
- RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed** Ubisoft Montreal 10
A landmark. Dated now, but was truly awe-inspiring at the time.
- ESSENTIAL Assassin's Creed II** Ubisoft Montreal 9
When everything gels correctly it casually murders its predecessor.
- Avatar** Ubisoft Montreal 7
If you've got a 3D TV, buy it. If not, it's too derivative to bother.
- Backbreaker** NaturalMotion 7
Great tech. Worth a look to see euphoria at work in sports.
- Baja: Edge of Control 2XL** Games 6
A little bland, but brilliant handling and sound.
- Band Hero** Neversoft 7
Robust, but the over-zealous censorship grates a lot.
- RECOMMENDED Batman: Arkham Asylum** Rocksteady Studios 8
Really delivers the goods. Best Batman game ever.
- Battle Fantasia** Arc System Works 7
A nice curiosity, but seriously, get *Super Street Fighter IV*.
- RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company** Digital Illusions CE 8
Destructible environments and humour. Together at last.
- RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 2** Digital Illusions CE 8
A top tier shooter, but the single-player mischief is M.I.A.
- RECOMMENDED Bayonetta** Platinum Games 9
It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy and weird.
- RECOMMENDED The Beatles: Rock Band** Harmonix 9
Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.
- Beijing 2008** Eurocom 5
Not the worst of its type, but far from a game to buy and keep.
- Bionic Commando** GIN 7
There are some great moments, but they're few and far between.
- ESSENTIAL BioShock** Irrational Games / 2K Marin 8
14 months too late, but this is grown-up gaming at its best.
- RECOMMENDED BioShock 2** 2K Marin / Digital Extremes / 2K Australia 9
Doesn't match the original's plot but the combat is fantastic.
- BlackSite: Area 51** Midway Studios Austin 5
A pedestrian shooter that needed more time in the lab.
- BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger** Arc System Works 8
Wildier, wackier and noisier than anything else on PS3.
- Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII** Ubisoft Romania 7
A simple aerial blaster. Flawed but fun.
- Blazing Angels 2: Secret Missions of WWII** Ubisoft Romania 6
Solid, varied, but not quite the ace of aces.
- Blur** Bizarre Creations 7
A race to power-ups rather than a racer with power-ups.
- RECOMMENDED Borderlands** Gearbox Software 9
A sprawling galetic adventure. An absolute ripper.
- RECOMMENDED The Bourne Conspiracy** High Moon Studios 7
Great presentation and vibe, samey action. Stylish, superficial.
- RECOMMENDED Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway** Gearbox Software 8
The most authentic WWII shooter ever made.
- RECOMMENDED Brütal Legend** Double Fine Productions 9
Must play. If God gave rock 'n roll to us: Tim Schafer is God.
- RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise** Criterion Games 9
Stunning and sharp, but we miss the dedicated *Crash Mode*.
- Call of Duty 3** Treyarch 7
Solid but surprisingly unspectacular. Seems rushed.
- ESSENTIAL Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare** Infinity Ward 10
Relentlessly exciting. You'd be insane or a glib man to miss it.
- ESSENTIAL Modern Warfare 2** Infinity Ward 10
Categorically the best shooter of the decade.
- ESSENTIAL Call of Duty: World at War** Treyarch 10
A class act. War at its worst (and best). Plus, Nazi Zombies.
- Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood** Techland 7
A cinematic and action-packed Western shooter.

- RECOMMENDED The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena** Starbreeze Studios / Tigon Studios 8
Moody and fresh. A must play.
- Civilization Revolution** Firaxis Games 8
Not for everyone, but great fun and shockingly addictive.
- Clash of the Titans** Game Republic 4
A piss-poor action game lacking in every way.
- The Club** Bizarre Creations 8
Original, compulsive and fun.
- RECOMMENDED Colin McRae: DIRT** Codemasters 9
Plenty of real rally action, unlike its sequel.
- Colin McRae: DIRT 2** Codemasters 7
Flashy and drives fine, but it's style over substance here.
- Conan** Nihilistic Software 7
A buldog of bloodletting, savage adventure and boobies.
- RECOMMENDED Condemned 2: Bloodshot** Monolith Productions 9
Gripping stuff. We were blown away.
- Conflict: Denied Ops** Pivotal Games 10
A real surprise package, and tough to write off as a gimmick.
- Cross Edge** Compile Heart 3
Every benchmark of excellence has been missed. Offensive.
- Damnation** Blue Omega Entertainment 3
Uninspired level design, broken gameplay. Avoid.
- RECOMMENDED Dante's Inferno** Visceral Games 8
Derivative and simple, but well-produced and very playable.
- Dark Sector** Digital Extremes 7
Solid but hardly perfect.
- Dark Void** Airtight Games 6
Unimpressive graphics, lacklustre sound and dull, dull combat.
- RECOMMENDED The Darkness** Starbreeze Studios 9
Stunning, original and gory as hell.
- RECOMMENDED Darksiders** Vigil Games 8
It'll test your patience but persevere and your satisfaction will swell.
- RECOMMENDED Dead Space** EA Redwood Shores 9
Super tense. The future of survival horror.
- Dead to Rights: Retribution** Volatile Games 6
Fine, but doesn't do enough to stand out. Needs more dog.
- Def Jam: Icon** EA Chicago 8
Pretty and highly kinetic. A bit cumbersome though.
- Demon's Souls** From Software 8
Those looking for an extreme challenge may have met their match.
- Devil May Cry 4** Capcom 7
Memorable bosses, but too much backtracking spoils things.
- RECOMMENDED DJ Hero** FreeStyleGames 9
A real surprise package, and tough to write off as a gimmick.
- RECOMMENDED Dragon Age: Origins** BioWare 9
As long as it is enthralling. Essential for patient fantasy freaks.
- Eat Lead: The Return of Matt Hazard** Vicious Cycle Software 6
Great concept and nice parody, but basic one-play stuff.
- ESSENTIAL The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion** Bethesda Game Studios 10
Simply put: awesome.
- EyePet** SCE London Studio 7
Harmless but pointless for adults; kids are the only ones for this.
- F.E.A.R.** Monolith Productions / Day 1 Studios 8
A chilling ride, but the graphics could've been sharper.
- F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin** Monolith Productions 7
An above-average shooter suffering from a lack of imagination.
- FaceBreaker** EA Canada 8
Great look, but very unbalanced.
- Fairytale Fights** Playlogic Game Factory 7
Quirky and sadistic, but too simplistic for engaging solo play.
- RECOMMENDED Fallout 3** Bethesda Game Studios 9
There's nothing else like it. A flawed masterpiece for the ages.
- RECOMMENDED Far Cry 2** Ubisoft Montreal 8
A technical open-world bell-ringer, but the travel time will grate.
- Ferrari Challenge** Eutechnyx 7
Serious and robust but it won't trouble *Gran Turismo 5*.
- ESSENTIAL FIFA 10** EA Canada 9
Buy it. Become obsessed. The best sports game available.
- RECOMMENDED Fight Night Round 4** EA Canada 9
Runs like a dream. Technical and strategic.
- RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII** Square Enix 8
Spellbinding graphics and 50+ hours of action.
- Folklore** Game Republic 8
Original and surprising with moments of genius.
- RECOMMENDED Formula One Championship Edition** SCE Studio Liverpool 9
Looks great, plays great. Good enough to last until *F1 2010*.
- Fracture** Day 1 Studios 7
Altering terrain is a neat twist, but overall it left us wanting.
- Fuel** Asobo Studios 4
Huge, but buggy, boring and undercooked.
- Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds** Pseudo Interactive 7
Fun but shallow. You'd take *Split/Second* instead these days.
- Genji: Days of the Blade** Game Republic 7
Flashy graphics, giant enemy crabs, piss-poor plodding gameplay.

- RECOMMENDED Ghostbusters: The Video Game** Terminal Reality / Threewave Software 9
Robust, charming and impeccably presented. Fantastic fun.
- The Godfather: The Don's Edition** EA Redwood Shores 6
It made a good PS2 game, but skip this port.
- The Godfather II** EA Redwood Shores 6
Starts as a decent crime caper, but alienates fans of the film.
- ESSENTIAL God of War III** SCE Santa Monica Studio 10
A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking, astonishing visuals.
- RECOMMENDED God of War Collection** SCE Santa Monica Studio / Bluepoint Games 9
Age has not diminished its impact. Purchase immediately.
- Golden Axe: Beast Rider** Secret Level 4
Destined for the chopping block. No co-op? Boo!
- Gran Turismo 5 Prologue** Polyphony Digital 8
An appetising taster, but not the full course.
- ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto IV** Rockstar North 10
The technical scope and scale of *GTAIV* dwarfs all. Remarkable.
- ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto: Episodes From Liberty City** Rockstar North 9
An essential, and often superior, companion to *GTAIV*.
- RECOMMENDED Green Day: Rock Band** Harmonix 8
Very good. Up there with *The Beatles: RB* and *GH: Metallica*.
- RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock** Neversoft 9
The last *GH* with a mostly decent soundtrack.
- RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero World Tour** Neversoft 9
Good, but missing crucial elements that make *Rock Band* better.
- Guitar Hero 5** Neversoft 7
Improving, but the tracklist is clearly half paid for by record suits.
- Guitar Hero: Aerosmith** Neversoft 6
Dated, and weak compared to the likes of *GH: Metallica*.
- RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica** Neversoft 8
The best *Guitar Hero* game since *Guitar Hero III*.
- Guitar Hero: Greatest Hits** Beenox 7
Great past *GH* tracks with full band support. Why wasn't it *DLC*?
- Guitar Hero: Van Halen** Underground Development 6
Only buy this cheap: \$90 is an insult. USA *GH5* buyers got it free.
- Hail to the Chimp** Wideload Games 3
Not funny, or enjoyable. Want to lose friends? Play this with them.
- Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince** EA Bright Light Studio 6
Play the first 30 minutes and you've played the whole game.
- Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix** EA UK 6
The chore-like structure will probably bore most.
- Haze** Free Radical Design 6
A flop. Patchy visuals, apostate level design and dismal AI.
- RECOMMENDED Heavenly Sword** Ninja Theory 9
Slick graphics and refined combat. A bit short though.
- RECOMMENDED Heavy Rain** Quantic Dream 8
Not quite a revolution, but clever and well-crafted.
- Hellboy: The Science of Evil** Krome Studios 6
Sluggish and generic. Ordinary on all counts.
- Heroes Over Europe** Transmission Games 7
A little rough, but not bad. *IL-2* is much better though.
- RECOMMENDED IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey** Gaijin Entertainment 8
Head-turning attention to detail. Best flight game on PS3.
- RECOMMENDED infamous** Sucker Punch Productions 9
A superpowered take on the urban crime-fighting sandbox.
- Iron Man** Secret Level 3
Filled to the brim with bugs. Totally substandard.
- John Woo Presents: Stranglehold** Midway Chicago 7
Won't set the world on fire, but packs frantic *Max Payne*-lite fun.
- Just 2: Hot Import Nights** Juice Games 7
Stout mechanics, glossy options. Not too deep though.
- ESSENTIAL Just Cause 2** Avalanche Studios 9
Grappling hooks, parachutes, stripper zeppelins. Buy this game.
- Kane & Lynch: Dead Men** IO Interactive 6
A let down. Gets close to greatness before crashing back down.
- Karaoke Revolution** Konami 7
Only for those who dislike drumming and love Rod Stewart.
- Katamari Forever** Namco Bandai 8
Joyfulness, digitally realised. Infectious.
- ESSENTIAL Killzone 2** Guerrilla Games 10
Lives up to the hype. Amazing graphics, hectic action.
- The King of Fighters XII** SNK Playmore 3
Grey, old and well beyond retirement. Irredeemable.
- Lair** Factor 5 5
It feels rushed and unfinished. Deeply disappointing.
- Legendary** Spark Unlimited 4
A rushed mess. Terrible.
- LEGO Batman** Traveller's Tales 7
Sound and faithful, but the formula is getting old.
- LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4** Traveller's Tales 7
Arguably the most thorough *LEGO* universe yet.
- RECOMMENDED LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original** Adventures Traveller's Tales 9
Happiness and wonder overcome us with this joyous adaptation.
- RECOMMENDED LEGO Rock Band** Harmonix / Traveller's Tales 8
Cute. Fewer tracks than we'd like, but you can export the lot.

Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust Team17 Software
An amazing new low for this generation. Worst game ever? Maybe.

ESSENTIAL LittleBigPlanet Media Molecule
Innovative and never-ending. It's time to hit the sack!

The Lord of the Rings: Conquest Pandemic Studios
It may offer spurts of fun, but it's mediocre in every way.

Lost Planet: Extreme Condition Capcom / K2 LLC
A half-arsed port you'd never bother with at this point.

Lost Planet 2 Capcom
Slim pickings for solo players but multiplayer buffs may dig it.

Lost: Via Domus Ubisoft Montreal
Some solid adventuring, but the voice acting is rubbish.

RECOMMENDED MAG Zipper Interactive
Shooter junkies take heed, this is where it's at for online combat.

Marvel: Ultimate Alliance Raven Software
Colourful, action-packed, co-op dungeon crawling.

Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2 Vicarious Visions
A compelling romp, but the button-mashing play needs updating.

Medal of Honor: Airborne EA Los Angeles
Short and lacks much true innovation. Too many problems.

RECOMMENDED Mercenaries 2: World in Flames
Pandemic Studios
Weak in many areas, but has fun in spades.

ESSENTIAL Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots
Kojima Productions
Insane productions values. A titan amongst games.

RECOMMENDED Midnight Club: Los Angeles
Rockstar San Diego
Visually weak at times. Great customisation and seamless racing.

RECOMMENDED Mirror's Edge EA Digital Illusions CE
A true original that makes some grand leaps in design.

Mobile Suit Gundam: Target in Sight
Namco Bandai Games
A rubber Godzilla of a title. What a pipe blocker!

RECOMMENDED ModNation Racers United Front Games
An incredible package. Creating is even more fun than racing!

Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe Midway Games
A fun game with mass appeal, but not very technical.

MotoGP 09/10 Monumental Games
Simulation freaks will want to veer well away.

RECOMMENDED MotorStorm Evolution Studios
Fast, hard and dirty. In 2007, it was everything game should be.

MotorStorm: Pacific Rift Evolution Studios
Boasts spilt-screen, but visually it hasn't come on far enough.

MX vs. ATV: Unleashed Rainbow Studios
Feels like a PS2 port with no next gen goodness.

MX vs. ATV Reflex Rainbow Studios
Motocross freaks will love it. Needed a little more zest though.

RECOMMENDED NBA 2K10 Visual Concepts / Kush Games
Excellent, broadcast-level presentation. The FIFA 10 of basketball.

NBA Live 10 EA Canada
Nearly as good as NBA 2K10, but you don't need them both.

NBA Street: Homecourt EA Canada
Brash, addictive arcade basketball. Instant fun.

Need for Speed: Carbon EA Black Box
A bit more Paul Walker than Vin Diesel, but solid.

RECOMMENDED Need for Speed: SHIFT Slightly Mad Studios
Superbly presented and a blast to play. Feels fast.

Need for Speed: Undercover EA Black Box
Technically faulty, and adds nothing good since *Most Wanted*.

Nier Cavia Unreleased
Decent enough, but there are richer experiences elsewhere.

RECOMMENDED Ninja Gaiden Sigma Team Ninja
A treasure trove of gaming goodness. And violence.

Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 Team Ninja
A sexy and rock hard title, but the gore's been cut.

Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising Codemasters
Authentic but niche. Very unforgiving.

RECOMMENDED The Orange Box EA UK / Valve Corporation
Portal is worth virtually any asking price alone.

Overlord: Raising Hell 4J Studios / Triumph Studios
A bundle of fun, mixing tactics with a juvenile love of chaos.

Overlord II Triumph Studios
Refined gameplay and more jokes, but control quirks persist.

RECOMMENDED PES 2010: Pro Evolution Soccer Konami
Improvements are welcomed, but still not as classy as FIFA 10.

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End Eucrom
Likes the part, but doesn't feel or play the part.

Planet 51 Pyro Studios
Like a dry cracker for dinner. Bland and boring, and no fun.

RECOMMENDED Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands
Ubisoft Montreal
Worth your time, but better swordplay could've really helped.

Prison Break ZooTuff
A below-average stealth game cobbled together on the cheap.

RECOMMENDED Prototype Radical Entertainment
A simple superhero kill-fest, but a truckload of guilty fun.

RECOMMENDED Pure Black Rock Studios
Still one of the best arcade racers on the market.

Quantum of Solace Treyarch
Nearly there, but has a few too many faults to get over the line.

RECOMMENDED Race Driver: GRID Codemasters
A born-to-rage racing rebel. Good, but lacks *Race Driver* vintage.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time
Insomniac Games
Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing the wheel.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction
Insomniac Games
A big, wild, good ol' fashioned adventure.

ESSENTIAL Red Dead Redemption Rockstar San Diego
This Western is bigger, badder and more violent than *GTAV*.

ESSENTIAL Red Faction: Guerrilla Volition, Inc.
Huge fun, and the best destruction effects ever.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 5 Capcom
A grand, bloody adventure, but the inventory system remains bad.

RECOMMENDED Resistance: Fall of Man Insomniac Games
A truly fantastic launch title with the best weapons around.

RECOMMENDED Resistance 2 Insomniac Games
Fast and furious, and stuffed with action.

Resonance of Fate tri-Ace
Deep, but also wordy, clunky and ugly.

RECOMMENDED Rock Band Harmonix
The best party game ever, until *Rock Band 2*.

ESSENTIAL Rock Band 2 Harmonix
The best music game around, despite MTV's poor treatment of us.

Rogue Warrior Zombie Studios / Rebellion Developments
A fiasco. We tried to like it, but it's too short and too terrible.

RECOMMENDED The Saboteur Pandemic Studios
Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

Sacred 2: Fallen Angel Ascaron Entertainment
Gigantic, but feels very slapped together.

RECOMMENDED Saints Row 2 Volition, Inc.
Puerile, mean-spirited and technically outclassed, if you care.

SBK-X: Superbike World Championship Milestone
Inches in front of *MotoGP 09/10*. Purists may still hate on it.

Scene It? Bright Lights! Big Screen! A2M
Weofully vanilla compared to the past Xbox 360 versions.

Sega Rally Sega Racing Studio
Familiar, old-school arcade fun.

Shaun White Snowboarding Ubisoft Montreal
Lacks the fine touch of realism or the excitement of *Lunacy*.

Silent Hill Homecoming Double Helix Games
New combat system is good, but lacks the cerebral chills.

The Simpsons Game EA Redwood Shores
Short, but the cromulent visuals embiggen the experience.

RECOMMENDED SingStar London Studio
Will last as long as the PS3. Have you seen the DLC?

Singularity Raven Software
Had potential but wasn't worth the wait.

RECOMMENDED Skate EA Black Box
A well-balanced masterpiece and true Tony Hawk killer.

ESSENTIAL Skate 2 EA Black Box
Perfect controls, plus New San Van is the best *Skate* city yet.

RECOMMENDED Skate 3 EA Black Box
Better in many ways, although the city isn't as cool as *Skate 2*.

SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Confrontation Slant Six Games
A sturdy, dependable effort that fails to excite.

Soldier of Fortune: Payback Caudron HQ
Serviceable we guess, but the gore has been cut out for us.

Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing Sumo Digital
Fun but shallow. Copies from the best but missing crucial spark.

Sonic the Hedgehog Sonic Team
There are cheaper ways to get a spare Blu-ray case.

Sonic Unleashed Sonic Team
It's the least awful Sonic game in years, if that means anything.

RECOMMENDED Soulcalibur IV Namco Bandai
Phenomenal, but will let down those expecting a revolution.

Spider-Man: Web of Shadows Treyarch / Shaba Games
Swift and tidy, but not exactly deep.

RECOMMENDED Split/Second Black Rock Studio
Doesn't feel as sharp as *Burnout*, but it's a true challenger.

Star Ocean: The Last Hope International tri-Ace
Feels like a cutesy, angst-ridden version of *Star Trek*.

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed LucasArts
Plays a good game but fails to use its idea to maximum effect.

Stormrise The Creative Assembly
A cack-handed, future war mess. Terrible controls.

RECOMMENDED Street Fighter IV Capcom / Dimps
A tight-fisted gut blow of wow, but get *Super Street Fighter IV*.

RECOMMENDED Stuntman: Ignition
Paradigm Entertainment
The vehicular equivalent of a 10-hour long orgasm.

ESSENTIAL Super Street Fighter IV Capcom / Dimps
Features a lion's share of new content for its price. Get it.

SuperCar Challenge Eutechnyx
Admirable effort, but feels a little bland despite the exotic cars.

Superstars V8: Next Challenge Milestone
An improvement, but it's still more shallow than it thinks it is.

RECOMMENDED Tekken 6 Namco Bandai
Easy to play, with the biggest roster ever. Feels a bit old, though.

Terminator Salvation GRIN / Halcyon Games
An abysmal failure. Short, and filled with glitches.

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09 EA Tiburon
Still the only golf game worth owning.

Time Crisis 4 Nex Entertainment
A solid attempt that doesn't quite reach 88 miles per hour.

TimeShift Saber Interactive
A little bipolar at times. Stick with arcade mode and enjoy.

TNA Impact! Midway Studios - Los Angeles
Good, arcade-style biff, but there's not enough content.

Tom Clancy's EndWar Ubisoft Shanghai
The console RTS is here, but it's far from a finished product.

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2 Red Storm Entertainment
A tense, realistic shooter. Cool gadgets.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. Ubisoft Romania
Tight and accessible, but a bit sterile.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas
Ubisoft Montreal
Slick, good-looking and utterly engaging. Smart shooting.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 2 Ubisoft Montreal
Doesn't quite feel as cool as the first one.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent
Ubisoft Shanghai
Obsessive and gripping, online and off. Obtain.

Tony Hawk's Project 8 Neversoft
No real reason to revisit this post-*Skate* at all.

Tony Hawk's Proving Ground Neversoft
Bloated and inconsistent. Pass.

Tony Hawk: RIDE Robomodo
Pure frustration made plastic. Sub-par game, ludicrous price.

Top Spin 3 PAM Development
Realistic tennis with a steep learning curve.

Toy Story 3 Avalanche Software
Cute, simple, and charming as hell. Way better than you think.

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen Luxoflux
A day of undermanning fun, but not much more.

Transformers: War for Cybertron High Moon
Its strength lies in multiplayer. Fun but not engaging.

Turning Point: Fall of Liberty Spark Unlimited
Shiesse from start to finish. Great concept, bogus execution.

Turok Propaganda Games
The new *Turok* packs bite bits it's missing a few teeth.

UFC 2009 Undisputed Yuke's
A technical, rewarding fighter that looks bloody unreal.

RECOMMENDED UFC Undisputed 2010 Yuke's
The new undisputed brand of sports fighting.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted: Drake's Fortune Naughty Dog
Awesome plot, awesome graphics, awesome action. This owns.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted 2: Among Thieves Naughty Dog
This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames.

Unreal Tournament 3 Epic Games
Fast, twitchy online multiplayer shooting. No spilt-screen though.

Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom Sony Online Entertainment
Bland hack 'n slash. No ballads will be sung of this adventure.

Valkyria Chronicles Sega WDW
Strategy and RPG heads alike should not miss this game.

Vancouver 2010 Eurocom
A handful of events that last one afternoon. Skip it.

Viking: Battle for Asgard The Creative Assembly
Slow attacks and weak visuals, but it has its appeal.

RECOMMENDED Virtua Fighter 5 Sega-AM2
As hardcore as fighting games get. Deep and balanced.

RECOMMENDED Virtua Tennis 2009 Sumo Digital
The top seed of tennis games made even better.

Wanted: Weapons of Fate GRIN
Designed only to appeal to mentally-subnormal 11-year-olds.

RECOMMENDED Warhawk
Incognito Entertainment / SCE Santa Monica Studio
Furiously addictive. Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night.

WET A2M
With so much style, who needs substance? Grindhouse fare.

Wheelman Midway Studios - Newcastle / Tigon Studios
Rubbish low-speed handling, and underdone throughout.

White Knight Chronicles Level-5 / SCE Japan Studio
Doesn't feel like a worthwhile way to spend 30-or-so hours.

Wolfenstein Raven Software / Id Software
Lacks soul but still delivers Nazi-blasting action.

WWE Legends of WrestleMania Yuke's
Gets by on retro charm, but feels ancient.

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010 Yuke's
If WWE's your thing, welcome to nirvana.

X-Men Origins: Wolverine Raven Software
A head slicin' chest beater of a slash 'em up. Repetitive though.

Yakuza 3 Amusement Vision
Certainly an acquired taste. Lots to do, but the slow pace grates.

INHOUSE

CRYTEK

LOCATION: FRANKFURT, GERMANY
FOUNDED: 1999



Famed for creating a game that laughed at PC hardware requirements (and broke PC gamers' wallets), Crytek is also spearheading technological advancements and making a couple of world-class game engines. Not bad for three Turkish brothers – Faruk, Avni and Cevat Yerli – who founded the company in the unlikely location of Coburg, Germany and is now based in Frankfurt.

You're threatened with a dry conversation when you begin to talk about game engines instead of the games that are built around them, especially considering that these developers are only just about to release their first PlayStation game, *Crysis 2* (the sequel to the game that earned them notoriety). Their tech's pretty special, and not only for what it can do but also considering it broke new ground in a time where cut backs are de rigueur across the industry.

Crytek focus on making development easier, and has tweaked its CryEngine to enable it to work across multiple platforms. Now on its third revision, Crytek is still making games of its own but also license their technology for other developers to use. This means it has two lots of income: one from their software sales, and one from their game engine.

Its growth is impressive. In early 2006 it set up its first satellite studio, Crytek Ukraine, which is working on an internal project. In May 2007 another studio opened in Budapest, Hungary. Crytek then bought Black Sea Studio in July 2008 before opening an office in South Korea in November of the same year. Its biggest acquisition at this stage is Free Radical, developers of the fan favourite *TimeSplitters* series, in January last year.

So what of the future? With all these studios we're anticipating massive projects from Crytek, depending on how well *Crysis 2* sells. Regardless of this title's success they are a studio guaranteed to be at the sharp end of the cutting edge.



Note chin creeper and half-sucked-mango hair

Dude had as much appeal as a wet tissue



Yogi had really let himself go



"Give us a kiss!"

2003

GHOSTHUNTER

Something strange in your PS2

We love it when games take risks, or do something unexpected and that aspect – whether it's a graphical effect, or a cool interface – becomes something for other games to look up to. It's regretful and a bit frustrating when that element comes at the expense of fun, or had so much polish that the developers overlooked boneheaded mistakes elsewhere.

Ghosthunter had some really cool graphics. Lazarus Jones, the main guy with the *Ghostbusters*-style gun, pew-pew laser and apparatus for trapping spirits, had a big

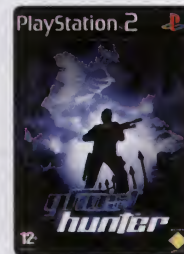
screen presence. You look at him now and he could pass for Nathan Drake's JRPG cousin, but at the time he had a lot of weight and in cut-scenes he looked incredible. The beasties he fought had a lot of character too, and the pools that they drew their inspiration from meant that *Ghosthunter's* mood was somewhere between horror and action.

On your travels you'd battle massive ogres, junk piles that had come to life, a gigantic teddy bear, as well as regular fodder such as glowing see-through spirits, and so on. The imagination put into each creation was embellished by sweet textures, animation and lighting effects, and the graphics in particular were a selling point. It totally nailed the 'creepy' factor as you walked around with your torch, shadows flicking off objects and demons.

Pity that the gameplay only had two things going for it – trapping ghosts and dead-easy puzzles – and the individual levels were huge. Like, enormous. Jones would have to trek through corridors, rooms, up and down stairs to get to the next engaging part of the level. There just wasn't enough to do, but it looked really, really good. Contemporaries *Silent Hill 2* and *3* had the scare factor and the great narrative, and while Studio Cambridge's game might've looked better on a technical level it just wasn't as fun with its monotonous tasks. Plus, the premise was paper thin, and Jones' credentials as a cop didn't matter.

Studio Cambridge even managed to snare some top voice actors: Rob Paulsen – in between being Pinky from *Pinky and the Brain*, Yakko on *Animaniacs* and one of the *Biker Mice from Mars* – was Lazarus Jones. Sir Michael Gambon, a.k.a. Albus Dumbledore, was main bad guy Hawksmoor. They were high-calibre actors, but like the package surrounding it their effort gave little reward.

Cambridge's previous game, *Primal*, shared some of *Ghosthunter's* achievements and flaws, and neither spawned a sequel. They'd shown they had the nous to make a viable and loved franchise with their charming *MediEvil* series (also in limbo), and we wonder why *Ghosthunter* didn't get a second stab considering the effort it takes to make an original title. **Paul Taylor**



INFO

CONSOLE: PLAYSTATION 2
GENRE: ACTION
DEVELOPER: STUDIO CAMBRIDGE
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UK
CURRENT PRICE: APPROXIMATE \$20

DID YOU KNOW?

Sometimes, games companies and their PR machines host events for the press in order to drum up a bit of excitement, or to pimp one of the developers travelling across the globe to speak with the people who will be writing about their game. For *Ghosthunter*, Sony arranged for members of the press to meet at Town Hall station in Sydney where they were then picked up by a hearse and driven to the Hero of Waterloo in The Rocks. Significance of the location? The Hero is apparently haunted, and the press were given each given a Bloody Mary to sip on (or leave on the tray, as we did). No ghosts were sighted or hunted in the Hero's cellars, though.

INSANE

IT SHOULD BE A GAME



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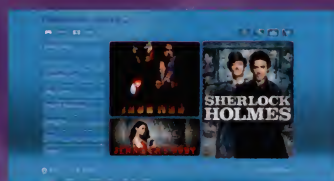
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